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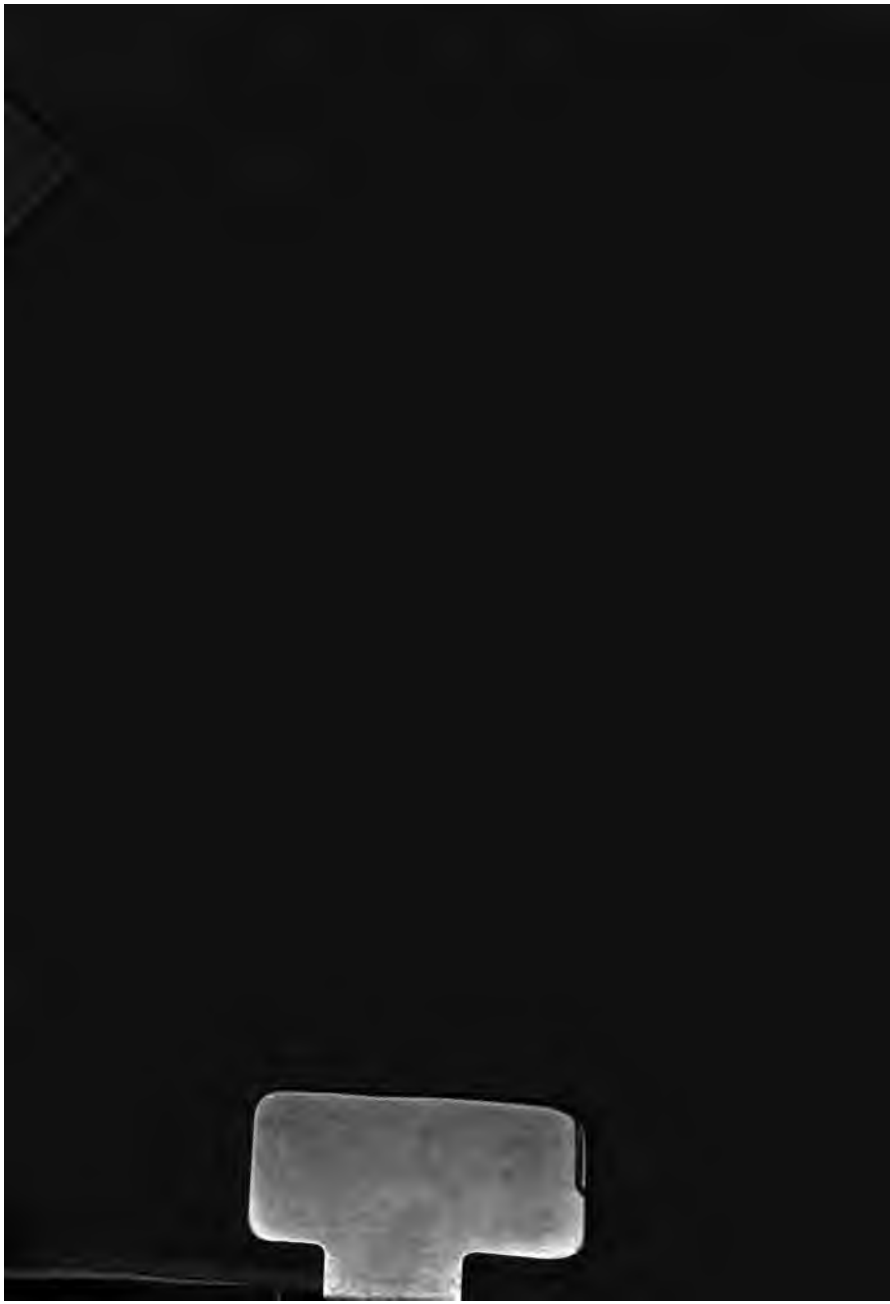

CHRISTIAN HOME-LIFE.

A BOOK

OF

EXAMPLES AND PRINCIPLES.

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The heart has many a dwelling-spot
  On lifetime's pilgrim way,
In many a land where human lot
  Leads human foot to stray.
But time, nor change, can e'er efface
  This truth, where'er we roam,—
That the heart has many a dwelling-place,
  But only once a home.

The cot may for a palace change,
  By fortune's golden spell,
But this can ne'er our love estrange
  From what the past can tell;
That truth, which memory loves to trace,
  Still lives beneath the dome,—
That the heart has many a dwelling-place,
  But only once a home.

FREDERICK ENOCH.

CHRISTIAN HOME-LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

WHEN the Most High was about to bestow upon Abraham a new and signal mark of the Divine favour, the reason assigned for it was, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." When a judgment was about to descend upon the house of Eli, so terrible, that "both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle," it was, "because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." The prophet Jeremiah invokes the wrath of God "upon the families that call not on thy name;" and he is commissioned to declare, in the name of the Lord, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel." In such words as these—and Scripture is full of them—parents and heads of families have both solemn warning and gracious encouragement. Blessings are promised, and judgments are denounced, according to the violation or the observance of parental duties and family relationships. Even apart from the clear and explicit statements of

Scripture, reason suffices to show the immense influence exerted by our home-life upon our interests, both for time and for eternity. Heathen moralists, no less than Christian teachers, have strenuously insisted upon the importance of family piety as essential to public virtue.

But whilst all admit this, too many rest satisfied with a mere verbal acknowledgment of it. Their words neither express any deep conviction, nor produce any practical result. Though called, as the heads of households, to a post of great responsibility, they do not really recognise their position; and they sadly fail in the discharge of their duties, to their own sorrow, and to the injury, often the irreparable injury, of those who are dependent upon them.

Many who are conscious of their failure in this respect feel it painfully. They grieve over a disorderly household and disobedient children; they mourn over the evil ways of those whom they most dearly love, but they seem quite unable to remedy, or even to arrest, the evil. The fact is, they have never set themselves seriously and prayerfully to consider how they should fulfil their duties. They have contented themselves with wishing and sorrowing, when they should have been prayerfully seeking strength to enable them to act.

Some, again, fail in this duty for the want of vigilant, persevering effort to maintain their authority. They allow themselves to become careless. They pass by faults which ought to be noticed and checked. They let the reins of authority slip from their hands. Like Eli, they first allow their children to do what is right in their own eyes, and then are wanting in the moral courage necessary to recover their lost rule. An

easy, good-natured, self-indulgent, or timid disposition on the part of parents will often thus bring ruin upon their children, and misery upon their household.

There are others, who, earnestly desirous of fulfilling their duty, are in danger of failing through inexperience and ignorance. They do strive to be faithful. They sincerely aim to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to "command their household after them to keep his way." But they meet with many difficulties. Then they become disheartened, and are tempted to give up trying. Or perhaps, having set themselves a high standard of household life, they are in danger of being too strict, of ruling by terror rather than by love.

To such persons it is hoped that this book will prove suggestive and helpful. Its design is to deepen the convictions of Christian parents and heads of households as to their responsibilities; to point out the great objects of the family ordinance; to guide the inexperienced; and to encourage by argument and example those to whom God has committed so solemn a trust.

It is almost impossible to over-estimate the importance of this subject. All true civilization, that is, all civilization which has a large moral element, rests upon the basis of family life. Our greatest poet, speaking of marriage, says,—

> "By thee,
> Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,
> Relations dear, and all the charities
> Of father, son, and brother, first were known."

The common relationship secures mutual help and pro-

tection. Life and property are held sacred. A check is kept upon selfish cupidity. Chastity is honoured. Each is interested in the prosperity of all. The sorrow or misfortune of one is felt as a common calamity.

A well-conducted family is a school of every social virtue. Reverence for a supreme authority; the existence of mutual rights, and the necessity of mutual service and subordination; the happiness resulting from an unselfish regard to each other's interests,—are lessons which, learned at home, best prepare us for the wider associations of life. The law of God and the welfare of the state most obviously coincide here. The family government underlies all forms of government; and woe to the state where the children are not governed under this older law. The mournful facts connected with our criminal population show us what crime and vice arise from its violation. Our criminal population is being constantly recruited from those who almost from their birth are destitute of parental control.

"The system," says Dr. M'Cosh, "is an admirable adaptation to our state and nature. Wild theorists have laboured to overturn it, but God in his providence hath inscribed folly on all their mad and profane attempts to disturb his arrangements; and it has been found, that after producing not a little temporary misery, these parties have been obliged to abandon their schemes as prejudicial or impracticable. In ancient Sparta, Lycurgus substituted public education for family training, and the experiment terminated in rendering a whole nation cold-hearted and selfish. Socialism under some of its forms has proposed to exchange a promiscuous for a household life, but, as might have been anticipated, the change, when carried

into effect, has led to caprice and cruelty, and opened the floodgates to every form of vice."[1]

It is the exception when the well-educated and morally trained degrade their social position by flagrant acts of crime. There is, it is true, but one security for high-toned morality—the renewal of the nature by the Holy Spirit of God. But the instances in which wise home training fails to secure at least ordinary morality are exceptional; and in those cases we do not know how much the failure may be due to defective methods, or in how many cases the evil result may be traced to early evil tendencies undetected, to early evil habits unchecked—it may be, fostered—by home influence and example.

The blessings of a pure home life we owe to the gospel. Heathenism has never produced it. Somewhere or other there has always been a fatal flaw, which has marred its beauty and destroyed its value. Neither Greece nor Rome knew it, in our sense of the words. We do not say that they never furnished bright examples of parental and filial affection, but all history attests that the family life, resting upon the mutual affection of husband and wife, who were united by an indissoluble tie which pledged them to purity, was unknown.[2] What both these nations became, through their violation of the law of the family, we do know. Their impurity sapped the foundation of every social compact, induced a life of mere selfish indulgence, and so prepared them for destruction.

[1] "System of the Divine Government."

[2] An exception should perhaps be made here as to the earliest and best days of the Roman Republic; but this is an exception which proves the rule.

Their literary and artistic culture was no substitute for the homely virtues which grow up under the shelter of the family as Divinely instituted. Those who so shamefully and systematically set at nought these most sacred ties came to be,—and we cannot wonder at it,—"without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."[1] The pages of their own poets and historians bear witness that the Apostle's estimate of the fearful depths of iniquity into which, in his time, they were sunk, was neither partial nor prejudiced.

The same fact meets us everywhere in heathen lands at the present day. Sutteeism, infanticide, neglect of or positive cruelty to aged parents, and abominations of which it were a shame to speak, which have had their counterparts in heathenism in all ages, at once suggest themselves to our thoughts as no less opposed to the family institution than to the positive commands of God. What the state of society and of social morals is in India, and under the influence of Mohammedanism both there and in other lands, is too well known to need further mention. Home in our sense of the word, the sense which the word of God teaches us to give it, home as the abode of purity, where children and parents form a happy circle, in which love rules and mutual confidence exists, is not known to heathenism. It cannot be. The religion of the Bible is the only one which asserts the true relation of the wife to her husband, and provides for the government and training of the family in accordance with that relation.

And it is where the gospel exercises its most powerful influence that the home is most distinguished by those qualities of order, sympathy, affection, and com-

[1] Rom. i. 31.

fort, which we attach to its idea. In countries under the sway of Popery, home-life in the highest sense of the word scarcely exists. The subtle and pernicious influence of the priest comes between husband and wife, between parents and children, and destroys the confidence and freedom of their association. The great want of domesticity and the great amount of vice which prevail in popish countries are but too well known.

Out of this Divine order, faithfully fulfilled, what blessings may we not expect to flow! What holy, happy homes would thus bless our land, and spread abroad, as from so many centres of power, an influence for good on all our social life! From these, men and women would go forth to establish new homes in our own or in other lands, to spread abroad the influence by which they themselves had been blessed. Our senate, our colleges, our halls of science, literature, and art, would thus be replenished, not only with genius, but with genius sanctified by piety. The grand prayer of the Psalmist would be answered, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations."[1]

Take the contrary view. Suppose that those ties which ought to be indissoluble were liable to disruption at the bidding of caprice or passion, and that the conjugal, the parental, and the filial relationships were continually set at nought, what

> "Shipwreck must ensue
> Of honour, principle, and fair renown."

[1] Psa. lxvii. 1, 2.

Even as it has been with the nations of antiquity, so would it be again. Social corruption would prepare the way for national destruction.

The more carefully we consider the law of the family as ordained by God, and view it in relation to the higher necessities of man's spiritual nature, the more fully we must be convinced that He, who knew what was in man, contemplated in this gracious ordinance our highest good as well as our greatest earthly happiness. And when the family relationship is sanctified by piety; when husband and wife are one in the possession of a saving faith and of spiritual hopes; when the children are regarded as a "heritage of the Lord," and, therefore, as a sacred trust, of which He will require an account; when the whole home-life is regarded as His,—there is a guarantee for happiness purer and more enduring than any that can exist on this side heaven. The Christian hope gives it its crowning glory, and makes it the purest earthly type of that state of blessedness which the believer can call by no name more endearing than *his eternal home!*

CHAPTER II.

THE BIBLE AND HOME-LIFE.

If the statements of the previous chapter be accepted, we shall be prepared at once to make our appeal to the word of God. In it the law of the family is written for us, both in precept and example. The family rests upon marriage, as marriage is understood according to the Divine ordinance. The statement of the book of Genesis is decisive upon this point. "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. . . . Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."[1] This law was ordained for the human race at the very outset of man's life, before the entrance of sin into the world; and was thus invested with a high moral significance. It contemplated not only earthly but spiritual blessings. As expounded by prophets, by apostles, and by our Lord himself, it is a type of the Divine relationship subsisting between God and the church.[2]

Our Lord came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil; and in his teaching, the law of marriage, which had been greatly violated by the Jews, was restored in its original purity. The Pharisees, tempting him, asked him to pronounce upon

[1] Gen. ii. 18, 24. [2] Isa. lxi. 10; Ephes. v. 23—27; Rev. xix. 7.

the lawfulness of divorce. His answer is contained in the words of the original law. The law of Paradise was restored by "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven,"[1] and remains the fundamental law of the family relationship in the new order of things introduced by his redemption.[2]

Lawless marriages were among the earliest fruits of man's sinful fall, and materially helped to bring about the corrupt state of society which existed before the flood. But in the midst of the increasing wickedness one family maintained its purity, and that purity God himself signally approved. Not for Noah's sake alone, but because his family had stood aloof from the seething vice amidst which they had lived, did God say to him, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." There was one sad exception, even here, as to personal character, but the purity of the family relationship had been preserved. In this respect they had isolated themselves from the world's corruption, and now they were alone with God in the awful solitude of a world destroyed. The one righteous family was saved.

The Divine law provides for the faithful discharge of family duties. The duties of husbands and wives, of parents and children, are clearly stated and enforced by the highest considerations. The religion of the Bible blends most fully with family life; and family life, as taught by that book, is the purest form of social life possible to man in his fallen state. It is poetic truth rather than poetic licence which says,—

> "Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
> Of Paradise which hast survived the fall!"

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 45, 47. [2] See Matt. xix. 3—9; v. 32.

The influence of the gospel on the position of woman in the family is so well known as to need only a passing allusion. "Wherever," says Neander, speaking of the early progress of the gospel, "Christianity found entrance, the equal dignity and worth of the female sex, as possessing a nature created in the image of God, and allied to the Divine no less than the man's, was brought distinctly before the mind."

One of the early Christian fathers, combating those ascetic tendencies which, no less than heathen licentiousness, are opposed to the pure spirit of the Christian life, writes, "It is not in the solitary life one shows himself a man; but he excels other men who, as a husband and father of a family, withstands all the temptations that assail him in providing for his wife and children, . . . without allowing himself to be turned from the love of God." And the same writer, describing the Christian matron, says, "The mother is the glory of her children; the wife, of her husband; both are the glory of the wife, and God is the glory of them all." And Tertullian writes of marriage between believers, "What a union is that between two believers, having in common one hope, one desire, one order of life, one service of the Lord! Both, like brother and sister, undivided in spirit or body, nay, in the true sense twain in one flesh, kneel, pray, and fast together; mutually teach, exhort, and bear with each other; they share in each other's troubles, persecutions, joys; neither has anything to hide from the other; the harmony of psalms and hymns goes up between them: Christ rejoices to behold and hear such things, and sends them his peace."

Indirectly, by incidental allusions as well as by

direct statements, the word of God gives its sanction to the family bond. The most endearing relationship which can subsist between man and his Maker is set before us by figures drawn from the parental and filial union.[1] The kindness of earthly parents is employed to set forth his compassion towards those that fear him.[2] The tenderness of a mother's love illustrates his tender care and affection to the sorrowing.[3] The union between Christ and the church is symbolized by the marriage tie.[4] The affection and obedience of the child, and the willingness of the parent to listen to his requests, represent the feeling of the believer towards his heavenly Father, and the gracious willingness of the Father to answer his prayers.[5] Purity in the family relationship, and wise discipline in the household, were tests of a man's fitness to rule in the church of God.[6] The laws of the family life stand in most intimate and beautiful association with the hopes of the gospel. The spirit of Christ towards little children pervades the whole record, and teaches its writers an unspeakable tenderness in dealing with this subject.

Parental obligation is very frequently taught in the Bible. The familiar intercourse of home was to be made subservient to religious instruction. Parents were to talk of "these words" with their children when they sat in the house and when they walked by the way, and when they lay down and when they rose up.[7] The law of God was thus pointed out as

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 18. [2] Psa. ciii. 13.
[3] Isa. lxvi. 13. [4] Ephes. v. 23—32.
[5] Matt. vii. 7—11. [6] 1 Tim. iii. 5, 11, 12.
[7] Deut. vi. 6, 7; xi. 19.

the supreme law of the house. His truth was to be "familiar in their mouths as household words." What better mode of instruction could be devised? And how could the Divine lawgiver more clearly indicate the value which he attached to family piety?

The denunciations of the word of God against violation of the family law, and against corruption in the family, bear the same witness. "Seest thou not what they do," exclaimed the prophet, "in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger."[1] No wonder that the nation was corrupt, when the very children were trained in the practice of idolatry!

The prophecy of Micah is a fearful exposure of the evil state of the nation through the corruption of its domestic life. The prevailing treachery, cruelty, deceit, oppression, and injustice are denounced in unsparing terms; but the words which give us the deepest insight into the state of the nation are found in the last chapter: "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house." Here was the root of the evil. The family was corrupt. The sacred ties of domestic life were continually being violated. The disease was in the very heart of the people.

[1] Jer. vii. 17, 18.

The concluding words of the last of the Jewish prophets are very significant in this view. He points out the difficulties against which the herald of the Messiah would have to contend, and announces the penalty which awaited those who would not receive his warning. Those difficulties would be found, he shows, in the moral degeneracy of the nation; and of that degeneracy the violation of the family law was the great proof. He was to come to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest," says Jehovah, "I come and smite the earth with a curse."[1]

The words of our Lord, Matt. xv. 3—8, remarkably show that in his time the law of the family was perpetually and even systematically dishonoured. The hearts of the fathers had not been turned to the children, nor the hearts of the children to their fathers; and the fearful end of the nation forty years later was the fulfilment of the Divine threatening.

We have abundant proof in Scripture that God has given to the family a very important place in the scheme of his moral government. The history of the Jewish nation fully shows this, and many passages from the Old Testament might be quoted in illustration. But the general tenor of the law of Moses, and the importance which is everywhere attached to the purity of the family, prove it even more strongly than single texts. The retribution wrought upon the Egyptians, so accurately corresponding to their cruel attempt to destroy the families of the Israelites;[2] the institution of the feast of the Passover as a family ordinance;[3] the dedication of

[1] Mal. iv. 6. [2] Exod. xii. 29, 30. [3] Exod. xii. 3, 4, 21, 27.

the firstborn as a token of the consecration of the family to God;[1] the recognition of family ties as of prime importance in the distribution of property;[2] the blessings promised to families, and the judgments denounced against them as such,[3] may be cited as proofs of the importance attached to the family by the Divine law.

Circumstances have changed, but the truth remains. The principles of the Divine government are the same in all ages. The word which cannot pass away teaches us in what light we ought now to regard the family institution. It is still God's ordinance. It still occupies an important place in the scheme of his moral government. "The first commandment with promise" is unrepealed. Parental obligation, as taught by the law of Moses, devolves upon us now. The relation of a virtuous, well-trained family to the well-being of succeeding generations cannot be destroyed. Its blessings not only widen but descend. Instead of the fathers are the children. The remembrance of a pious ancestry is more valuable than untold wealth, is an honour higher than all earthly distinctions.

> "My boast is not that I deduce my birth
> From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth;
> But higher far my proud pretensions rise,
> The son of parents pass'd into the skies."—COWPER.

The relation of the family to the establishment and spread of the Divine kingdom in the world is another

[1] Exod. xiii. 2.

[2] Numb. xxvii. 6—11; xxxvi. 1—12.

[3] Deut. i. 36; Lev. xx. 5; Numb. xvi. 26—33; 1 Kings xxi. 22; Jer. xxiii. 34; xxxi. 1; xxxv.

aspect of this truth. "What," says John Howe, "will God have these families for? Plainly to be seminaries of religion. . . . He did not design the original constitution of that fundamental relation by which mankind was to be continued and propagated in this world, only that there might be a continual descent of human nature, but that religion might still be transmitted from age to age. And this design of His he never quits."

This view is strikingly confirmed by the fact that the covenant with Abraham is made to rest on the ground of his family piety.[1] And it was promised to him, that in his seed "all the families of the earth should be blessed." God tells us by the prophet that he did not make the earth in vain, that "he formed it to be inhabited."[2] But with what kind of inhabitants would he have it peopled? Will not his design be fulfilled when the promise to Abraham shall be accomplished in Christ, when the waste and desolate places shall be dwelt in by the families of those that serve him? By them shall earth's wildernesses be "like Eden, and her deserts like the garden of the Lord."[3]

Dr. Krapf, well known by his missionary labours and researches in Eastern Africa, thus bears testimony to the value of the family in relation to missionary efforts:—"These tribes," he says, "at once sensual and destitute of all the conveniences of life, should have Christianity presented to them not only in sermons and teaching, but realized and embodied; exercising its influence on every-day life, especially in the married

[1] Gen. xviii. 19. [2] Isa. xlv. 18. [3] Isa. li. 3.

state, and in the bringing-up of children. Families, Christian families, really converted fathers and mothers, with well-nurtured children, are the tools which are chiefly needed for missionary work in Eastern Africa. Once surround the missionary with families who present in living, visible reality, Christianity in life and death, in labour and repose, in marriage and education, in public worship, in common prayer and psalmody, in devout listening to the word of God, then will our poor careless Wanika easily and clearly understand to what a blessed condition out of their present destitution, to what life out of death, to what light out of darkness, to what joy in the Holy Spirit out of present dread of evil spirits, to what love out of selfishness, to what genuine peace out of worldly security, we are helping them."[1]

Both in the Old and New Testaments peculiar honour is put upon the family relationship. Families are everywhere spoken of as a blessing. And the idea is not merely an Eastern one, belonging to a certain stage of social progress, and to a country but scantily populated; it rather teaches us what the conditions of our social life ought always to be. There is something fundamentally wrong in a state of society where children are a burden. They are "an heritage of the Lord."[2] The richness of the olive expresses the wealth which a man possesses in them.[3] The blessing of the man that feareth the Lord is, "Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."[4]

[1] "Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours in Eastern Africa."

[2] Psa. cxxvii. 3. [3] Psa. cxxviii. 3. [4] Psa. cxxviii. 6.

"Children's children," Solomon tells us, "are the crown of old men."[1]

The truth thus taught of old in the word of God has been recognised by all civilized nations in the best and purest period of their national existence. Increase of population is admitted to be one of the evidences of national prosperity; and thus an experienced and humane philosophy does homage, as it always must, to the supreme authority of the word of God. The family is the backbone of the nation.[2]

The history of "the holy child Jesus" is one which, more than any other, shows the honour which is put upon the family relationship. Our blessed Lord, in condescending to take upon himself our nature, became a member of a family. It was in the household of the just Joseph, and under the care of the devout and pious Mary, that he spent his childhood and youth. He submitted to the family law. He grew up under the influence of family affections and family sympathies. He who, in his helpless infancy, was cradled in a mother's arms, learned from a mother's lips the histories and prophecies of holy men of old, which had prepared for his coming.

The numerous examples of family piety, mentioned with such honour in the Bible, teach the same lesson. Abraham, the father of the faithful, has been already referred to. Later in the history, and just at the important crisis of the settlement of the people in the promised land, the conduct of Joshua stands out very clearly in relation to family religion. In the last act of his career the servant of God comes prominently

[1] Prov. xvii. 6. [2] Psa. cxxvii. 4, 5.

forward, not only in his public but in his domestic life. We can imagine how, amid the duties which pressed upon him as the leader of the people and commander of their armies, he found rest and refreshment to his spirit in the retirement of a home sanctified by religion. And now that the time of his departure is at hand, he gathers all Israel together, to give them his final counsels. With military conciseness he recounts the merciful dealings of God with the people, and asserts His claims. But the force of his appeal was supplied by his own resolve,—"*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*"

The pious care of the patriarch Job over his sons, and his allusions to domestic life, show us how fully he recognised the great importance of family piety. Looking back upon the brighter past, he mentions two things which imply this. "Oh that I were as in months past, . . *when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; . . when my children were about me.*"[1] His care for them in after life indicates that they had been trained in the ways of the Lord. It is a beautiful picture of the early and comparatively pure days of oriental life which is given in the first chapter of the book of Job. The sons, now grown up and settled in life, maintain a constant intercourse between each other, with their sisters, and with their old home. The father watches with delight their prosperity and their affection, and with holy solicitude seeks to use his influence and authority, as the head of the house, to guide them in the ways of holiness. The priest as well as the patriarch, he calls them to the solemn

[1] Job xxix. 2—5.

duties of religious worship, and offers sacrifice on their behalf. "Thus did Job continually."[1]

There are few of the patriarchs, judges, and pious kings of Israel, whose history does not contain some testimony to the importance of family piety. The testimony, indeed, is woven into the very texture of the history. The case of the parents of Moses is decisive as to family religion, even during the degradation and misery of Egyptian slavery.[2] The parents of Samson sought the Lord with earnest desire on behalf of their son.[3] The narrative of the birth and dedication of the prophet Samuel cannot fail to bring before us the simple but exalted faith of his mother.[4] The history of Ruth, so charming in its pure poetry, is no less beautiful as an example of filial piety. The grief of David for Absalom, his tender concern for Solomon, and numerous passages in the Psalms, bear the same testimony. The sorrows of his later life were mainly traceable to his disregard of family ties. And Solomon, fatally as he erred in this respect, bears witness to the excellence of his own religious training in early life.[5]

On the other hand, the punishment of the family of Eli shows how seriously God regards the violation of family duties. Eli, as we have seen, failed in the exercise of parental authority. He allowed the time for correction and restraint to go by. A feeble remonstrance, which his sons despised, was all he dared

[1] Job i. 5.
[2] Compare the narrative, Exod. ii. 1—10, with Heb. xi. 23.
[3] Judg. xiii. 8, 22, 23. [4] 1 Sam. i.; ii. 1—11.
[5] Prov. iv. 1—4.

venture. One emphatic sentence records both his sin and his punishment. "I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, *and he restrained them not.*"

There is one beautiful scene in New Testament history which must receive more than a passing remark. Who has not felt his sympathies stirred by the record concerning the family at Bethany? The thoughtful Mary; Martha, who in her love of action was tempted to be careful and troubled about many things; and Lazarus, of whom we know nothing except that the Master loved him. But the great charm gathers about their Divine guest. After the toils of the day, how refreshing to the wearied "Man of sorrows" to rest amidst these loving hearts and ministering hands! With what joy they would see him, in the deepening twilight, drawing near their home! How they would gladden their hearts in familiar intercourse with their Divine Master and loving Friend! And how, on the morrow, when he was gone from them, would the remembrance of his sojourn with them refine and sanctify their common intercourse, and make them feel that it was possible to live a life of holy thoughts, of loving words and deeds, amid this scene of earthly care, and even to transform it into something beautiful and Divine! Happy the household where he now loves to dwell!—where the spirit of affection, hallowed by piety, bears witness of his perpetual presence!—where it may be said of each member of it, as it was said of that household of Bethany, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus!"

The Bible is still our guide. And if these pages tend in any degree to promote family religion, they

will do so because throughout they endeavour to expound and enforce the principles which Scripture teaches. Religion cannot be the light and life of our homes, save by a devout and prayerful obedience to it as the law of our home-life.

CHAPTER III.

PIETY AT HOME.

We all readily recognise the music there is in the word *home*. It is sacred in our thoughts. The old house where we were born, the faces with which we first became familiar, the scenes which first attracted our attention, the incidents of our earliest remembrance, the sorrows and joys of childhood, and the deeper impressions of our youthful days, combine to give especial attractiveness to that one spot of earth —the only one on which we can ever look with the same intense feelings of interest.

Passing years do not diminish, but rather help to deepen this feeling. New joys and unexpected sorrows become associated in maturer life with the home of our childhood. Our life continues to be influenced by it, even though we have long left its peaceful shades— even though the home itself, save in our fond and loving memories, has ceased to exist.

All our better literature breathes this spirit whenever it touches upon domestic life. Many of our poets, and among them the purest and best, have recorded, in words that will not die, this home feeling. It has given a chastened and hallowed tone to many a lofty strain. Milton, Cowper, Scott, Wordsworth, Hemans, and Montgomery, widely differing as they do in the character of their poetic genius, and in their range of thought, amply prove the true poet's appreciation of

home memories and home-life. Goldsmith's affectionate longing for the home of his youth as a retreat in age must have awakened a response in many a heart:—

"In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my share,—
I still had hopes my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.
* * * * *
And as a hare whom hounds and horns pursue
Pants to the place from whence at first he flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return—and die at home at last."

By many a camp fire, amid the perils of war or the wilderness, have the strains of "Home, sweet home!" drawn tears from the eyes of otherwise hardened men. Sometimes the intense longing for home passes into a well-known form of disease. If the longing is not gratified, "melancholy, loss of sleep and appetite, and finally, perhaps, disease of the lungs, supervene." It is recorded that "once, when a Highland regiment was on foreign service, in a very healthy climate, many of the men fell sick without any apparent cause, till the hospital was filled with invalids. One beautiful evening, when the moon was gliding tranquilly through the heavens, a skilful surgeon who was attached to the regiment took a ramble through the barracks, where the piper was playing the favourite Scotch air,—

'Lochaber no more,
May be to return to Lochaber no more.'

The piper played in the most touching manner, and

when the doctor drew near to the room in the barracks where the soldiers were assembled, he observed that they were all listening to the strains of the piper with deep emotion. Some leaned against the wall, others lay along the ground; one of them was in tears, while another sobbed aloud, with his face hid in his hands. It immediately occurred to the doctor that it was the music which occasioned the sickness of the soldiers, by exciting painful recollections of their native land. He therefore sent for the piper on the following day, gave him a present that he might not name the circumstance, and directed him to play lively tunes in future, and on no account whatever to repeat the strains of 'Lochaber no more.' The piper played his merriest airs, the invalids grew better, and in a short time there was not a sick man in the whole regiment."

"There is a land, of every land the pride,
Beloved by Heaven o'er all the world beside;
Where brighter suns dispense serener light,
And milder moons emparadise the night;
A land of beauty, virtue, valour, truth,
Time-tutored age, and love-exalted youth.
The wandering mariner, whose eye explores
The wealthiest isles, the most enchanting shores,
Views not a realm so bountiful and fair,
Nor breathes the spirit of a purer air;
In every clime the magnet of his soul,
Touch'd by remembrance, trembles to that pole:

* * * * *

Where shall that land, that spot of earth be found?
Art thou a man?—a patriot?—look around:
Oh, thou shalt find, howe'er thy footsteps roam,
That land *thy country*, and that spot THY HOME!"

MONTGOMERY.

Wordsworth has beautifully depicted the effect of home memories on the imagination in his description of the sailor, who,

> " . . . in hours
> Of tiresome indolence would often hang
> Over the vessel's side, and gaze and gaze;
> And while the broad green wave and sparkling foam
> Flashed round him images and hues that wrought
> In union with the employment of his heart,
> He thus, by feverish passion overcome,
> Even with the organs of his bodily eye,
> Below him in the bosom of the deep,
> Saw mountains, saw the forms of sheep that grazed
> On verdant hills, with dwellings among trees,
> And shepherds clad in the same country grey
> Which he himself had worn."

How supremely important is it that this natural feeling—one of the deepest and the purest of our fallen nature—should be made subservient to the highest purposes of life; that memory should in after years associate scenes of piety with its earliest recollections; that the powerful influence which such associations must have on the modes of thought and habits of life should be on the side of virtue and holiness! The memories of home, even though that home may not have been sanctified by piety, often keep a place in the mind of the reckless and profligate, and form the one vulnerable point in a conscience otherwise hardened by sin. May we not hope for greater results when the affection and tenderness of home are made doubly endearing by the hopes and blessings of the gospel? The full effect of such memories, of such homes, eternity alone can disclose.

In order to accomplish these results, our homes must be thoroughly Christian. The relations and duties of home must all be regulated by that law of life which the gospel unfolds. Affection must be sanctified and heightened by a holy solicitude for the highest well-being of all who compose the family. The ordinary life of the home circle must be made, in its purity, simplicity, order, and all-pervading spirit of love, a religious life. This is the sacred responsibility of the heads of the family. To this all inferior interests must be subordinated. Their authority must be made to subserve this end. The most earnest prayer, the most persevering effort, the most vigilant watchfulness will be well repaid if this is attained.

The home-life of the late Dr. Waugh, in his early days, appears to have been of this kind. His father was a farmer, and, as was the custom in Scotland in the middle of the last century, the farm-servants formed a part of the household. "The connection between master and servant was of a patriarchal character. The masters extended a parental care over their servants, who cherished a filial affection for them in return. They sat, ate, and often worked together; and after the labours of the day were ended, assembled together around the blazing fire in the 'farmer's ha',' conversing over the occurrences of the day. Not unfrequently religious subjects were introduced, and the lives of godly men, and of those who, in evil times, had battled or suffered for the right, were affectionately called to mind. But the religious order of the family was the distinguishing characteristic. In fact, a strict and regular observance of pious duties so generally

prevailed, that it was one chief cause of the high eminence in Scriptural knowledge, sobriety of manners, and every domestic virtue, for which the northern part of Great Britain was then justly celebrated." [1]

The principles by which a Christian home should be governed may be readily discovered. The graces which adorn the Christian character shine with their richest lustre in the setting of the home circle. Nowhere else do the "fruits of the Spirit" grow with richer, riper luxuriance. The fullest opportunity is found there for the development of those virtues which peculiarly display the spirit of Christ. Forbearance with one another in the thousand occasions for its exercise which the closeness of home association demands;[2] gentleness both of manner and spirit; mutual help and kindness in the common duties and difficulties of ordinary life;[3] good temper under the provocations which will sometimes be given, but which may be prevented from growing into quarrels by the exercise of a patient and generous spirit,—will bear witness to the power of the Christian life. And above all these, "charity, which is the bond of perfectness," [4] will complete the whole, and be the secret, yet never-failing security for order and happiness.

The slight, trivial, and seemingly insignificant details of our home-life exercise a mighty moral influence on those who live amid them, and especially on those whose first impressions are received from them. Whether a child's consciousness first awakes to a

[1] "Life of Dr. Waugh."—Religious Tract Society.
[2] Ephes. iv. 2; Col. iii. 13; Gal. v. 22.
[3] Gal. vi. 2; Ephes. iv. 31, 32.
[4] Col. iii. 14.

home of order, of kindness, of cheerful piety, or whether its earliest impressions are of confusion in the house and ill-temper in the parent, will go very much towards deciding its own habits in after life. It is a time of greatest importance in the man's history when the child becomes conscious of its individuality, and is, therefore, from that time forth, up to the measure of its capacity and knowledge, a responsible being. Indeed, the whole period of childhood, looked at in this light, is one, both to the child and the parent, of awful because of eternal interest. So much is acquired unconsciously, so much is the character formed by surrounding circumstances, by the influences to which the child is subjected during the growth and development of its reasoning faculties, that parents cannot feel too deeply the importance of making home a sphere of Christian influence and example. The full extent to which such influence is exerted on the mind of the child it is impossible to trace. Life goes on in its accustomed course, and the way in which the character is formed, the direction which it takes, is often not perceived. Tiny animalcules build the coral islands of the Pacific. Silently and secretly, for how long none can tell, these minute workers add, day by day, the scarcely measurable deposit, till the surface rises above the waves, and becomes an abode for man. And the character of the child—indeed, of the man—is formed to a great extent thus silently and hiddenly. Imperceptibly, influence after influence affects him, and habit after habit is acquired, which will determine for good or evil his whole future course.

What its parents are will decide to a great extent what a child's surroundings shall be, and to what sort

of influences it shall be subject. The moral qualities of the parents, which come out incidentally and unintentionally, often have the most powerful influence on the character of the home. Consequently, the personal relation of the heads of a household to God is of supreme importance. It is the secret spring of such a life as shall best promote the interests of religion in the family. A solemn responsibility is put upon those to whom God intrusts the care of a home, and it can only be fulfilled in one way. With them piety must be the chief thing, the one thing needful. The heart, the mind, the life, must be perpetually consecrated by the indwelling of that Holy Spirit, who alone can make us, as good trees, bring forth good fruit. Our temper must bear witness to his calming, hallowing influence. Our manner must tell of the peace which passeth all understanding. The holy and orderly arrangements of the house must give evidence of the reign of Christ within us. The tone of the life must show that we are the subjects of his Divine transforming grace. Our spirits, in their secret springs of life, must be readily responsive to the purest influences. Our inmost life must be sustained and invigorated by constant fellowship with God.

We have, in the lives of great and good men, practical illustrations of the sort of home-life which will prevail where true personal piety is the foundation of the household arrangements.

The value of family religion seems to have been well understood by our Puritan forefathers. In the absence of many of the developments of religious life which now exist, and in which so much Christian energy is employed, the home received, especially in

isolated country houses and districts, a very direct and decided religious supervision. Modes of life have so much changed since then that we cannot positively determine how far the methods of the Puritans might be wisely reproduced in the present day; but the principles by which they sought to govern their households, the firm, holy, and kind authority which they maintained, are as desirable now as then, and the methods which they pursued, so far as we know them, are at least well worth our study. Their life has to us somewhat of a sombre cast, but the sombreness is not sadness. Age and distance give it a sober but not unpleasing hue. There was no want of quick and joyous life under that calm and dignified exterior. What to us is antiquated was to them fresh and new. Their forms of speech and modes of action, though cumbrous to us, were full of vigour and energy to them. The flashing eye, the responsive tone, the tender greeting, the quick sympathies, the sacred joys and sorrows of home, were common to them as to us. And their deep sense of the supreme importance of "piety at home" gave their whole life a moral power. What a charm was thus shed over many a quiet English manor-house, far away from the polluting influences of city or court! What a quiet fervour of holiness was thus maintained amid the toil of business and the distractions of political strife! The devout daily worship; the constant recognition of the word of God as the law of life; the association of religious principles with the ordinary life of the household; the Sabbath catechizing; the constant supervision given by parents to the education, and especially the religious education, of their children; the reverence for parental

authority which was so religiously enjoined; the familiar pious intercourse with favoured guests,—all contributed to the holy influences of such homes; homes which have helped so much to give a high tone to English life, and which have furnished some of her noblest worthies for England's service.

Mrs. Hutchinson's pictures of domestic life are very suggestive as to the value which was attached to family piety in her day.[1] The fervour with which she dwells upon the facts of her own early history shows how deep must have been the impression made upon the child's heart by the holy beauties of her home. Her parents, she says, were "both of them pious and virtuous in their own conversation, and careful instructors of my youth both by precept and example." Her father was "a most indulgent husband, and no less kind to his children; a most noble master. . . . He was severe (strict) in the regulating of his family. . . . All his virtues wanted not the crown of all virtue,—piety, and true devotion to God. As his life was a continued exercise of faith and charity, it concluded with prayers and blessings, which were the only consolations his desolate family could receive in his death. Never did any two better agree in magnanimity and bounty than he and my mother, who seemed to be actuated by the same soul. The worship and service of God both in her soul and her house, and the education of her children, were her principal care. She was a constant frequenter of week-day lectures, and a great lover and encourager of good ministers, and most diligent in her private reading and devotions. . . .

[1] "Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson," by his Widow.

The privilege of being born of, and educated by, such excellent parents, I have often revolved with great thankfulness for the mercy, and humiliation that I did no more improve it." Making all allowance for the partiality of a daughter's affection, this is still a noble testimony.

Her own home-life, after her marriage, was regulated on the same principles; and her husband was in this respect a noble "help-meet" for her. Writing for her children, and referring to her happiness in her married life, she says of her husband, "He loved her (his wife) at such a kind and generous rate as words cannot express; yet even this, which was the highest love he or any man could have, was yet bounded by a superior,—he loved her in the Lord as his fellow-creature; not his idol, but in such a manner as showed that an affection, bounded in the just rules of duty, far exceeds, every way, all the irregular passions in the world. . . He was as kind a father, as dear a brother, as good a master, and as faithful a friend, as the world had; . . but the more dear any were to him, the more was he offended at anything that might take off the lustre of their glory. As he had great severity against errors and follies pertinaciously pursued, so he had the most merciful, gentle, and compassionate frame of spirit that can be imagined to those who became sensible of their errors." Of his house "he was the best ornament, and an example of virtue so prevailing,[1] as metamorphosed many evil people, while they were under his roof, into another appearance of sobriety and holiness." The character of the wife may surely be inferred from her appreciation of the character of her husband.

[1] Having such power.

The life of the poet Quarles, whose "Emblems," disfigured sometimes by an affectation belonging to the artificial style of the age, yet contain rich treasures of devout poetry, is a noble example of "piety at home." And his example is the more striking, as he was one of the very few who resisted the fascinations of a court life, and maintained his domestic virtue and his piety towards God unsullied.

"In all his duties to God and man," says his widow, "he was conscionable and orderly. . . And for his family, his care was very great over that, even when his occasions caused his absence from it. And when he was at home, his exhortations to us, to continue in virtue and godly life, were so pious and frequent, his admonitions so grave and piercing, his reprehensions so mild and gentle, and, above all, his own example in every religious and moral duty so constant and manifest, that his equal may be desired, but can hardly be met withal."

The secret of this holy influence and example is readily explained; and in the light of that explanation we can easily believe that the testimony above cited, though drawn by the hand of sorrowing affection, is not exaggerated. He was a man of very devout spirit, of close and constant communion with God. His recorded prayers and meditations, no less than his poetry, bear witness of this. We may expect a holy life from the man who could thus pray:—

"Leave me not, O God, unto myself. O Lord, forsake me not too long, for in me dwells nothing but despair, and the terrors of hell have taken hold of me. Remove this heart of stone, and give me, O good God, a heart of flesh, that it may be capable of thy mercies, and

sensible of thy judgments; plant in my heart a fear of thy name, and deliver my soul from carnal security; order my affections according to thy will, that I may love what thou lovest, and hate what thou hatest; kindle my zeal with a coal from thine altar, and increase my faith by the assurance of thy love. O holy fire, that always burnest and never goest out, kindle me. O sacred light, that always shinest and art never dark, illuminate me. O sweet Jesus! let my soul always desire thee, and seek thee, and find thee, and sweetly rest in thee; be thou in all my thoughts, in all my words, in all my actions that both my thoughts, my words, and my actions being sanctified by thee here, I may be glorified by thee hereafter."

Poets have often sung nobly, yet lived faithlessly; but there is ample evidence that it was not so with him. The exquisite strains of devout song which he has left us were really the utterances of his heart, and had their counterpart in his life. The secret conditions of that life were doubtless as he himself sings:—

"Thou art my Life; if thou but turn away,
My life's a thousand deaths. Thou art my Way;
Without thee, Lord, I travel not, but stray.

"My Light thou art; without thy glorious sight,
Mine eyes are darkened with perpetual night.
My God, thou art my Way, my Life, my Light.

"Disclose thy sunbeams, close thy wings and stay;
See, see how I am blind, and dead, and stray,
O Thou that art my Light, my Life, my Way."

A generation or so later we have, in the lives of the Henrys, remarkable illustrations of the power and beauty of Christian home-life. At Broad Oak, the

residence of Philip Henry, piety was the atmosphere of the house, the spring of its calm and constant joy. And that household, in all its holy order and chaste beauty, has been fully drawn for us by the reverent hand of that son whose piety sheds back a lustre on the home of his youth, and whose own home in after years was no less a witness to the power of godliness. "No sooner," he says of his father, "had he a tent, but God had an altar in it."[1] The solemn vow which he made at his ordination, that he and his house would serve the Lord, he faithfully fulfilled. "He would often say, 'that we are really what we are relatively. It is not so much what we are at church, as what we are in our families. Religion in the power of it will be family religion.' In this his practice was very exemplary. He was one that walked before his house in a perfect way, with a perfect heart, and therein behaved himself wisely. His constant care and prudent endeavour was not only to put away iniquity far from his tabernacle, but that where he dwelt, the word of Christ might dwell richly. If he might have no other church, yet he had a church in his house."

With him also the secret of "piety at home" was piety in the heart. "He made a conscience of closet worship. It was the caution and advice which he frequently gave to his children and friends, "Be sure you look to your secret duty; keep that up, whatever you do; the soul cannot prosper in the

[1] It is instructive to notice that this remark occurs also in the Commentary on Genesis xii. 7. Who knows how many of the exquisite illustrations of practical piety, which that truly great work contains, were treasured up amid the teachings and influences of that home, where God ever "had an altar"!

neglect of it." He and his wife constantly prayed together, morning and evening. He would say that this duty of husbands and wives praying together is intimated in 1 Pet. iii. 7, where they are exhorted to live as heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers, especially their prayers together, may not be hindered. This sanctifies the relation, and insures a blessing upon it."

His mode of conducting family worship, which will be subsequently referred to, undoubtedly largely contributed to promote and maintain this spirit of piety in the household. Religion was with him, and, so far as his influence could go, with all his house, an every-day thing. "Many of his servants," during their residence in his family, "got those good impressions upon their souls which they retained ever after, and blessed God with all their hearts that they ever came under his roof." His children, as we may suppose, were brought up "in the fear of God, with a great deal of care and tenderness. His carriage towards them was very mild and gentle, as one who desired rather to be loved than feared by them. He ruled, indeed, and kept up his authority, but it was with wisdom and love, and not with a high hand."

The spirit of his home-life is well expressed in a passage in his diary, dated April 12th, 1681. It is needless to point out the holy self-consecration which breathes in every line.

"This day fourteen years the Lord took from me with a stroke my firstborn son, the beginning of my strength, in the remembrance whereof my heart melted this evening. I begged pardon for the Jonah that raised the storm; I blessed the Lord for having spared

the rest; I begged mercy—mercy for every one of them, and absolutely and unreservedly devoted them, myself—my whole self, estate, interest, and life—to the will and service of that God from whom I received all. Father, hallowed be thy name!"

Can we wonder that a household, ordered and ruled in accordance with this spirit, was a means of blessing to all its members? The moral influence of such a home-life is incalculable; and such influence can be exerted nowhere but at home. There is a peculiar sanctity attaching to the family relationship when thus hallowed. The natural and the spiritual blend, and gain in their union new beauties. Happy the children of such a home. All sweet and holy thoughts will, in after life, cluster around it. It will be fragrant with holy memories. It will be an unfailing source of comfort and instruction. Its lessons will teach, and its influences will sway, the gray-headed man. From that hallowed centre of light and love, a light shall go before each new pilgrim, which, by the blessing of God, shall guide him to the very gates of the celestial city. A truly Christian home is the most beautiful thing earth can know. It is

> "A joy for ever;
> Its loveliness increases, it will never
> Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
> A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
> Full of sweet dreams, and health, and pious breathing."

Matthew Henry, inheriting his father's spirit, and influenced by his example, furnished in his own history a singular proof of the blessedness of Christian home-life. In the spirit of his father he resolved, "If ever God shall call me to the charge of a family, I will walk

before my house in a perfect way, with an upright heart, not doubting but that thou, God, will come unto me: my house shall be a Bethel; wherever I have a tent, God shall have an altar: and Joshua's resolution shall be mine; whatever others do, I and my house will serve the Lord." And he faithfully fulfilled his resolve. His biographer has taken great pains to describe with much explicitness and minuteness his family life. And thus he is set before us as a man whose "relative affections were not only very tender and sincere, but were of a holy and spiritual nature, such as became a Christian."

But his family piety, like his father's, was not confined to the regular and devout observances of family worship, and the impartation of religious instruction. Religion was the life of his life, and sanctified all the relationships and duties of home. "He was one of the most affectionate relations and most faithful friends in the world. This he made to appear by his constant prayers for them, by writing good and kind letters to them on all occasions. To his parents he was a truly dutiful and affectionate child. Few parents were so happy as they *in every one of their children*, and in him especially. No place was so good to him as his father's house." [1]

But it is rather from the tone of his whole life, as it is revealed in his biography, than from any particular statements, that we get the most valuable witness to his "piety at home." All that concerns himself, his affairs, his children, his parents, his friends, is recognised and spoken of in its relation to the highest and most important interests of life. The Christian hus-

[1] Life, by W. Tong.

band, father, master, friend, is evident in every trivial record. He felt, and was not ashamed of expressing, his dependence upon God and his allegiance to Him in all things. The joys and sorrows, the ever changing events of family history, are all seen in his letters and diary in the serene light of his fellowship with God. Religion was inseparably associated and blended with all his family life.

The life of Mr. Wilberforce furnishes another very beautiful illustration of the nature and value of home piety. "Some men appear all nobleness in the eye of the public, but we dare not follow them into the family circle. Not so Mr. Wilberforce. The name to which the civilized world did homage acquires fresh lustre amidst the sanctities of home. There, especially, was to be seen the full sunshine of his kindliest affections." He is described as "having always the spirit of a boy, and, in his country walks with his children, singing like a blackbird, and making the shades resound to his voice. . . . In his own household he was the priest as well as the loving friend. The senator, in the midst of his children and servants, reading and expounding the book of God, kneeling before the throne, and praying with a pathos and fervour which none who ever heard forgot, is a picture of deeper interest and sublimer meaning, than the same man on the hustings encharming the multitude, or in the senate delighting the legislature with his eloquence." [1]

What peaceful, happy scenes are thus suggested to our imagination! The spirit and power of holiness breathes over all the house. Everything is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. Every influence to

[1] Life of Wilberforce. Religious Tract Society.

which the families of such homes were subjected, would, we feel, be a hallowing one. There is all due restraint, but no lack of wise liberty. Philip Henry "allowed his children a great freedom with him, which gave him the opportunity of reasoning with them, and not frightening them into that which is good." The ordinances of religion are duly honoured, and its observances strictly enjoined, but there is no sanctimoniousness. The best proof is in the result. The promise in these cases was literally fulfilled, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord."

The secret of all this, if secret it can be called, is not very difficult to discover. A church in the house was the ideal of these men, and, by the Divine blessing, they attained their aim. The personal piety of the parents was the forming principle of the family life. The natural union was cemented, the family affection was deepened, by the diviner relationships of the gospel. The amenities of social life, the pure joys of home, were rendered a thousand-fold sweeter by a common relationship to a Father in heaven, by the fellowship of the Elder Brother, and by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Every enjoyment was heightened by being shared together as the gift of a reconciling God, and every sorrow transmuted into a blessing by the recognition of his paternal wisdom and love. They are hallowed spots, these pious homes,—

> "Where streams of love, from Christ the spring,
> Descend on every soul;
> And heavenly peace, with balmy wing,
> Shades and bedews the whole."

CHAPTER IV.

HOME PIETY AND HOME HAPPINESS.

THERE is some serious defect either in the religion itself, or in the mode of family government, where "piety at home" is repulsive in its character. It ought to add a charm to domestic enjoyment, and to amend that defect in it which otherwise will cause it to pall upon the appetite. In by far the larger number of instances it does so. Other things being equal, the family in which genuine piety is the pervading influence is the most contented and happy. There the domestic relationships are an unfailing source of pleasure, and childhood is freest and fullest of life.

> "There is a spot of earth supremely blest,
> A dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest;
> Where man, creation's tyrant, casts aside
> His sword and sceptre, pageantry and pride.
> While in his soften'd looks benignly blend
> The sire, the son, the husband, father, friend;
> Here woman reigns; the mother, daughter, wife,
> Strews with fresh flowers the narrow way of life;
> In the clear heaven of her delightful eye
> An angel guard of loves and graces lie;
> Around her knees domestic duties meet,
> And fireside pleasures gambol at her feet."

Two men among the most illustrious of modern times for genius and piety, John Foster and Dr. Chalmers,

are witnesses that the recognition of parental responsibility in its highest aspects does not destroy, but heightens the innocent enjoyments of home. Writing of himself in the company of his children, Foster says, "I never mind how much din is made by them, if it is not absolutely in the room where I am at work. When I am with them, I am apt to make them, and join in making them, make a still bigger tumult and noise; so that their mother complains that we all want whipping together. I have a great dislike to all stiff, and formal, and unnecessary gravity; if it were not so, I should be to children quite an old man, and could have no easy companionship with them." "In no respect," writes his biographer, "did Dr. Chalmers present a more attractive example of all that is kind and lovely than in the bosom of his own family. His children were young, but they were to him objects of daily and most affectionate interest; he was playful amongst them, even to occasional romping. His smile of fatherly love was ever ready to encourage their approaches; and when absent for a few weeks, he printed little letters for their acceptance. I can hardly trust myself, even at the distance of so many years, with detailed references to that once happy and precious home in which it was my lot to spend several months."[1]

Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, "at the time of his hardest work in London," retained a fresh and unfailing interest in home-life, and "would often, on his way to the House, buy pictures, and conceal them in his waste paper basket, to enjoy the glee of his younger children, and their daily renewed astonishment at discovering them there in the morning." His manner to them, as

[1] Dr. Smyth, quoted in "Memoirs of Dr. Chalmers."

they grew older, is shown in the following casual mention of it by one of his sons, then a mere boy.

"I cannot help being struck with the exquisite tenderness of heart which my father always displays; his unwillingness to debar us from pleasure, the zeal with which he will make any sacrifice or take any trouble to gratify us, is most surprising. One little example will describe his whole conduct. He, being really unwell, was lying nearly asleep on the sofa, and observing me upon another, with my feet hanging over the side, he quietly got up, placed a chair under them, and then lay down again. His whole appearance, with his worn and thoughtful face, is so much that of a man whom one would approach with some sensation of awe, that these small though exquisite acts of tenderness are the more unexpected, and consequently the more pleasing."[1]

We are not surprised that his home was a happy one, when such tender thoughtfulness, such genial affection was united with true piety. After a visit to his house, the Rev. Charles Simeon, of Cambridge, thus writes:—

"Certainly if I should live to visit your house again, I shall do it with no little joy, for I do not expect to see in this world a brighter image of heaven than I was there privileged to behold. A sweet savour of love remained upon my spirit for a long time after, and I am not sure that it has quite evaporated yet."

"All my recollections of my early home," wrote Dr. Morison, in 1833, "are of the most pleasurable kind. Never was union of heart and purpose more happily displayed. My mother was a pattern of all that was gentle and kind in the female character, and my

[1] Life of Sir T. F. Buxton, by his Son.

father was so wise, so prudent, so mild in his family rule, so guileless in the expression of all his social affections, that a note of discord was never heard in our little peaceful circle. While memory holds her seat, I can never forget the remarkable degree in which my beloved parents were made to bless each other, by the spontaneous and warm reciprocation of every domestic and lovely virtue."[1]

The name of Legh Richmond will be long remembered for his successful efforts to secure for his children a happy home-life, in which the religious element should be predominant. While he ever kept before him the great object of the Christian parent, the true conversion of his children to God, he showed in himself, and in his family order and arrangements, that true piety and true happiness were one. "It was," says Mr. Bickersteth, in his "Domestic Portraiture," "my friend's anxious desire and sedulous endeavour to get the heart on the side of truth, to infuse an innocent prepossession in its favour, and to make duty enjoyment. It was often said by the members of his family, 'We love religion, because we see papa so lovely and happy under its influence.'"

His letters to his children bear witness to the affectionate sympathy which existed between them, and to the wise earnestness with which he sought their highest welfare. "While at home, as well as when abroad, he kept up a correspondence with his family, which he used to call his *Home Mission;* and to these notes he requested a reply." A spirit of the deepest tenderness breathes in these letters, as well as in those which were written on special occasions and for special pur-

[1] Life of Dr. Morison, by Rev. J. Kennedy.

poses of instruction or admonition. One specimen must suffice; it will fully show how familiarly and lovingly he associated piety with the pursuits and enjoyments of home.

"Perhaps my dear little C—— thought she was too young to receive a letter, but you see I have not forgotten you, nor L—— either, for whom you may tear off the other half of this sheet, and if he cannot read it himself, some one will read it to him. I wish very much to know how you are behaving since I saw you: what character will your pen and your needle give of you when I ask them? And what will your book say? Your playthings, perhaps, will whisper that you have been very fond of *them;* well, a little fond of them you may be, but you must not think *only* of them, my little nursery queen. There are better things than playthings in the world;—there are mammas and mammas' commandments; and papas and papas' wishes; and sisters and sisters' instructions; and there is the Bible and the God of the Bible, and Jesus Christ and his salvation. My little girl must think of these things, and be an example to her young brothers in order, obedience, and good manners.

"You are now at that age when Jesus 'increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.' Meditate on this. I am glad to think you are acquiring knowledge; but ever keep in mind that all other knowledge is valuable or not, just so far as it is united to spiritual knowledge. The word of God and its blessings form the highest study of man. May my children grow in such knowledge. Farewell, my child, and try in everything to please,—"Your dear Papa."

All his domestic arrangements for their studies and for their amusements were made in this spirit. He never lost sight of their highest welfare. Yet there was nothing obtrusive or repelling in his method. He sought to win them to Christ, and to make all their home-life subservient to this end. It is not wonderful that of a home thus regulated one of his children could afterwards write, "Our dear father had succeeded in making his home dear to all his children. Home was never talked of without emotion by any of them. They left it with regret. They returned to it with the fondest affection, and connected with it every endearing association. Our beloved parents' integrity and uniform consistency engaged our esteem, and the multiplied resources of innocent gratification which surrounded us, won our regard."

With his own expression of his wishes and hopes in this matter, wishes and hopes which God so graciously enabled him to fulfil, we may close this notice of his "piety at home."

"Some may think I am too fond of seeing my children around me: if it be a weakness, I must plead guilty to it. From their infancy I have looked forward, as far as providential circumstances would permit, to find comfort, support, and companionship in my children. It has ever been my heart's desire and prayer to give them a useful, happy, exemplary home; were I to fail here, life would indeed become a blank to me."

The precise forms in which the responsibilities of the family relationship are to be developed, so as to secure a happy home-life, must, of course, differ according to external circumstances. The accidents

of wealth or poverty, of comparative leisure or the reverse, will in this respect have great influence. But the claim of a family for a home sanctified and made happy by religion is the same under all circumstances. This is the Christian man's first care, whether he be rich or poor. He must "learn first to show piety at home."[1] There is no character so contemptible as that of the man whose public religious life is belied by serious defects here; whose home is a place of punishment rather than of pleasure to those who dwell in it; whose coming casts a gloom upon every face. John Bunyan, in his plain and vigorous words, has aptly characterized such an one,—"A saint abroad, and a devil at home."

Burns' "Cotter's Saturday Night," drawn as the description is from scenes not uncommon in Scotland, nor in England, shows us that poverty is no hindrance to a cheerful home piety; and some of the instances already cited show us that wealth and comfort may be made subservient to its promotion. In every rank of life the home is the true test of a man's holiness, of a woman's sincere piety. The moral atmosphere of the house mainly depends on those whom Providence has placed at its head. Whether the life of the household shall be of this world or of heaven; whether the children shall learn to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,"[2] or to prize most the things which are seen and temporal; whether they see piety in its own pure and attractive loveliness, or in harsh and rigid repulsiveness; whether they are made happy by its influence, or get to dread it as the cause of their misery, depends very much on the parents. They

[1] 1 Tim. v. 4. [2] Matt. vi. 33.

give the tone to the whole household life. The spirit in which they live will insensibly but most powerfully affect each member of the family, the servants and dependents, but most of all, the children.

This influence will be exerted much more by what they habitually are, than by any outward religious observances. These, which ought never to be slighted, and the great importance of which will be hereafter fully discussed, ought to grow out of the sincere and devout spirit of those who govern the house. The enjoined observance of the Lord's day, and of religious worship, should naturally arise from their own devout and loving attention to them. Children and servants should be able to see that those, of whose family they form a part, live in the spirit of the Psalmist, "I was *glad* when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."[1] Religion must evidently be the unfailing spring of their own joy. Their delight in God and his ordinances must be reflected by all their conduct, in all their household arrangements.

Where home piety and home happiness combine, the authority vested in the heads of the household will be blended with true sympathy with all the members of it. In a truly pious household, the servant, the apprentice, the visitor, share in the regard of those under whose roof Providence has made them sojourners. For the time, each one is recognised as belonging to the family circle. They are regarded with affectionate concern. Their well-being is sought. They are made sharers in the common happiness. With what deep solicitude have those occupying positions of service in their family or their business been

[1] Psa. cxxii. 1.

regarded by pious men and women! Considering them as for the time committed to their charge, they have sought to make the temporary sojourn a means of lasting blessing. By acts of kindness, by cheering words, by look, and tone, and temper, by familiar conversation, by the remembrance of them in the daily prayer, or by more direct efforts, and opportunities wisely seized, they have sought to lead them in the right way. And, in many cases, with what blessed results! The servants, the apprentices, the visitors, have seen religion in all its loveliness, and have carried away with them a desire to possess its blessings for themselves.

In a truly Christian home, the supremacy of the claims of religion will be allowed. Business engagements, social engagements, even public religious engagements, save only the services of God's house, must be subordinated to the prior claims of home; and where these are rightly allowed, they will never clash with other duties. All the appropriate and admissible duties of social intercourse, and certainly all the public claims of religion, will harmonize with this. For the religious duties of the household, for daily worship, for the instruction of the children, there must always be found time and strength. There cannot be a truly happy home where this is not the case. To neglect household religion, in order to fulfil public claims, is to neglect duties which nature and revelation alike urge most imperatively upon us.

Sir Thomas More was one who thus recognised the claims of home to be as important as the more pressing and obtrusive demands of public business. "While," he says, "in pleading, in hearing, in deciding causes or

composing differences, in waiting on some men about business, and on others out of respect, the greatest part of the day is spent on other men's affairs, the remainder of it must be given to my family at home; so that I can reserve no part of it to myself, that is, to study. I must talk with my wife, and chat with my children, and have somewhat to say to my servants; for all these things I reckon as a part of my business, except a man will resolve to be a stranger at home; and with whomsoever either nature, chance, or choice has engaged a man in any commerce, he must endeavour to make himself as acceptable to those about him as he can." This was his aim; and the daily life of his household, as described by Erasmus, shows with what conscientious care he carried it out. "I should do injustice to his house," Erasmus says, "by comparing it to the academy of Plato; . . . it would be more just to call it a school and exercise of the Christian religion. All its inhabitants, male or female, applied their leisure to liberal studies and profitable reading, although piety was their first care. No wrangling, no angry word was heard in it; no one was idle; every one did his duty with alacrity, and not without a temperate cheerfulness."

So, too, the biographer of Dr. Morison writes,—"With all his love of work, Dr. Morison did not sacrifice the claims of home and private religion to the demands of public labour." "I may say with truth," he writes of himself, "though with deep humility and without boasting, that I endeavoured to co-operate as best I could with my dear wife in her admirable plans and devisings for the good of our children. My studies, my pastoral visitations, my

attendance on public committees, especially that of the London Missionary Society, occupied much of my time, but I was never a forth-facing man; I never kept late hours; and I never was a stranger in my own family. I dreaded the thought, from my first entrance on married life, and even before, of attending to the vineyards of others and neglecting my own; and though I am conscious, as a parent, of many infirmities, I know that the testimony of all the members of my family, and of my private circle too, must be, that I have always been a domestic man, and that no public duties, however imperative, have withdrawn me at any time from the inexpressible endearments of the home circle."[1]

The gains of a few hours' more business, the fascinations of the social circle, even the enjoyment of eloquence employed upon the loftiest themes of religion, are but ill compensations for a family altar wanting its sacrifice, and the impressible mind of childhood left to the questionable care of hirelings. If he who "provides not for his own has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," that father, that mother, surely incurs a heavier condemnation who, on any plea whatever, neglects the higher claims of religious duty to his children, or who fails in that childward care by which they might be led, by the Divine blessing, in the "ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace."[2]

It may be asked, Are we then to have no social intercourse out of our own family circle? To this it may be replied,—for it is to mothers particularly, though not exclusively, that this question refers,—Any mother who duly and deeply feels her responsibility will not

[1] Life, by Rev. J. Kennedy. [2] Prov. iii. 17.

wish, for the sake of personal gratification, to neglect the most important duty committed to her. The mother of a young family, who rightly estimates her great moral influence over her children, will spend, and will enjoy spending, her evenings at home. Her children claim her. The hour or two before their bed-time is often most valuable for religious instruction. Who should hear the simple prayer of childhood, and finally commend these lambs to the care of the Good Shepherd, if not the mother? To neglect this, to leave the unhappy children to amuse themselves, or do worse, while she, whom God has put in charge of them, is seeking amusement and winning admiration elsewhere, is a sad and shocking thing. No mother, no father, can be guilty of such neglect with impunity.

It is to a very different kind of training that we are indebted for men like the Henrys, and Doddridges, and others, who, both in earlier and in recent times, have "served their generation by the will of God." Save in rare and exceptional instances, we can usually connect a career of peculiar worth with a home distinguished by a sound and fervent piety, and made happy by its all-pervading peace. In the shelter of such homes, protected during their infancy and childhood from the grosser forms of worldliness and vice, daily nurtured by all gentle and holy influences, the best men of all times have been prepared for their work and warfare in the world. Their awakening intellects have been wisely guided. Their characters have been moulded after noble examples; their principles have been regulated by the word of God, the only standard of moral truth. Above all, they have breathed that atmosphere of loving piety

which, fresh and wholesome as the invigorating airs of heaven, has preserved a healthy tone of thought and feeling; and they have learned in a father's wise government, in a mother's gracious tenderness, to perceive and admire the supreme happiness of a truly religious life. "I have known those," says the biographer of Matthew Henry, of the household at Broad Oak, "that upon their first acquaintance there, were surprised to see so much *beauty of holiness*, and were ready to say, 'Surely the Lord is in this place! . . . this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!'"[1]

[1] Gen. xxviii. 16, 17.

CHAPTER V.

TEACHING AND TRAINING.

WHAT Christian parent has not often lingered prayerfully over the brief record of Timothy's childhood, and the picture thus presented of those pious women who early instructed him in the way of the Lord:[1]—the aged grandmother, resting at the end of life's journey, and gathering up the lessons of experience wherewith to enforce the truths of the Divine word upon the heart of the young listener: the mother, with all a mother's tenderness, and in the spirit of ancient Israel, endeavouring to fulfil the sacred injunction respecting the laws of the Lord, "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy childrer."[2]

This is a duty which early presents itself to the consideration of parents. As the child's intelligence begins to develop itself—and how early that often is!—they are invested with new responsibilities. Here is mind to inform as well as character to mould. Here is the time and opportunity for conveying the knowledge of that truth which is able to make wise unto salvation, and of conveying it in such a way as that the memory of it shall never be lost.

All will admit that the early education of the child devolves upon its parents, and that they are peculiarly responsible for its religious education. How many have been indebted for almost all the Scriptural know-

[1] 2 Tim. i. 5; iii. 15. [2] Deut. vi. 7.

ledge they have possessed to early parental instruction! How many more have thus had the foundation laid for profound theological acquirements and aptitude as religious teachers! And how few of those who have not had these advantages, ever acquire in after life an accurate and familiar knowledge of the facts and words of Scripture!

This instruction cannot be commenced too early. Pictures will convey a knowledge of sacred facts long before the child is able to read for itself, and they will furnish abundant opportunity for making the memory familiar with the lessons they teach. A taste for drawing may thus be turned to good account, and the rough sketch, fresh from the pencil of the father or mother, will often be more effective than the purchased engraving. The stories, too, of the Old and New Testaments are, when rightly treated, as fascinating to children as fairy tales, and they will hear them over and over again with undiminished interest. They may thus be made familiar with the most important truths from the earliest period of consciousness. And as the reasoning faculties are developed, the practical truths, and even the doctrines of the Bible, may be made to "drop as the rain, and distil as the dew."[1] The evil of sin, the obligations of God's holy law, the necessity of a Divine renewal of the heart and life, the love of God in the gift of his Son, salvation through Christ alone, a life of holiness as the inseparable accompaniment of pardon, the hopes of a blessed immortality, may thus be taught, in language which children will easily comprehend, and in a spirit which will at once attract and impress their minds.

[1] Deut. xxxii. 2.

Crude as the child's conceptions will necessarily be, God, heaven, hell, sin, salvation, will thus become the subjects of his first independent mental operations. His memory, too, will be stored with narratives which the imagination will not fail to produce in vivid though perhaps rude pictures of the facts to which they relate. Who does not remember—though the remembrance may call up a smile now—the quaint reality with which Scripture scenes and incidents pictured themselves to the mind in childhood? And how tenacious is our hold of each childish conception! Christ, the tender Shepherd, gathering the lambs in his arms, or, with a look of ineffable love, putting his hands on little children, and blessing them; the histories of Paradise, and the fall; of Noah, Moses, David, Samuel, will, in a pious home, be among the earliest stories which a child will hear of that great world which lies beyond the narrow circle of his own little life. And who can trace the effects of this early teaching on his after history? The ways of sin may be trodden afterwards with unblushing face and a silenced conscience; errors of opinion may lead the bewildered heart of the once simple child far from its early rest; but yet these recollections of better things, these quaint and childish pictures, bright with all the colours of the morning of life, and still fresh with all its dews, will retain a cherished place in the memory, and may prove the strong but gentle influences by which the Father shall draw him for ever to himself.

It need hardly be added that religious instruction should never be made a painful task. "I reprobate," writes the Rev. J. A. James, "the practice as a most injurious one, of setting a long lesson of catechism or

Scripture to a reluctant child, and then punishing him for not learning it. If we wish to disgust their minds with the ways of godliness, this is the way to do it. Many an injudicious parent, in the very act of teaching piety towards God, calls into existence and activity the very tempers which it is the design of religion to suppress." The ways of wisdom must be made "ways of pleasantness" to those whom it is our earnest desire to lead therein. And the manner of conveying religious instruction will have much to do with the impression made upon the mind of the child as to the nature of religion itself. "He that *winneth* souls is wise."[1] So to represent religion to the tender mind of infancy, as to give the impression that it is a gloomy thing, or to speak of its claims in a morose and repulsive manner, will defeat our object, and perhaps excite a disgust in the mind which no after instruction will be able to remove. A cheerful piety, speaking of Divine things with delighted interest, —speaking, not only in the words employed, but in the tones of the voice, in the beaming of the eye, is one of the most important elements in early religious instruction. Nor will this cheerfulness lessen, but rather deepen the impression, when in sad and solemn tones the fearful consequences of neglect and disobedience are in their turn presented to the mind.

The history of the church of Christ, and the biographies of pious men, furnish us with abundant proof that this estimate of parental duty, as to the religious teaching and training of children, is by no means an exaggerated one. Such influences have been exerted on childish hearts with memorable success. And the

[1] Prov. xi. 30.

recorded instances are but specimens of innumerable others which have no earthly memorial, but "which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

It is related of Origen that he was indebted to his father, Leonides, for his profound knowledge of Scripture, and for the early direction of his thoughts to Christian truth. He was required to commit a portion of Scripture to memory every day, his father explaining to him its meaning. The boy took great delight in his task, and the influence of his father's piety seconded his instruction. The awakening intellect of the child was thus brought from the first into immediate contact with the pure truth of God, and his life took its direction from this early training. Leonides, with deep thankfulness to God for the hopes which his son's diligence and interest in Divine truth encouraged him to cherish, devoutly longed and prayed that the Holy Spirit might take up his abode in his heart. It is said that he would often lean over the sleeping child, kissing his breast as "a temple in which the Holy Spirit designed to prepare his dwelling."[1]

The story of Augustine's conversion is generally known, but it is worth relating here on account of the striking illustration which it furnishes of the influence of a mother's piety. His early life after his boyhood was one of profligacy, and he subsequently fell into gross religious error. But the remembrance of his mother's piety kept conscience alive, and frequently awakened deep solicitude in his mind.

Augustine's own testimony to her excellence, in his Confessions, is one of the highest tributes which

[1] Neander.

Christian history furnishes as to the value of maternal piety. She was not happily married, but by her gentleness and patience she overcame the harsh temper of her husband, and finally was the means of leading him to Christ. Her solicitude for her son, and his deep sense of his indebtedness to it, are seen in all his allusions to her. When he fell into Manichæan errors, she wept for him, he says, more than mothers weep for the deaths of their children. During the nine years in which, as he expresses it, he "wallowed in the mire of that deep pit," she ceased not to weep and pray for him; bearing with him, though she shrank with horror from his blasphemous heresy. To such faith and patience the blessing sought was not denied. "Go thy ways," said a bishop, to whom she told her anxiety, "and God bless thee; for it is not possible that the son of these tears should perish."

This saying was remarkably verified. Just before her death, and after he had become a true Christian, she exclaimed, "Son, for mine own part I have no further delight in anything in this life. What I do here any longer, and to what end I am here, I know not, now that my hopes in this world (in his conversion) are accomplished." Who can doubt that the recollection of a mother's prayers and tears, and the influence of her holy life, were the means of leading him from the ways of vice and error to the knowledge of the truth?

Describing the spread of the gospel in the early ages of the church, the historian Neander adduces from the testimony of pagans themselves unimpeachable evidence of the fact, "that pious Christian females, pre-

senting patterns of genuine wives and mothers, often furnished a beautiful contrast to the prevailing depravation of manners and reckless pursuit of earthly things to be found in the families of pagans, or of mere nominal Christians. From such wives and mothers," he goes on to say, "the true religious instruction of the husband, or at least the pious education of the children, often proceeded. The pious Nonna, by her prayers and the silent influence of the religion which shone through her life, gradually won over to the gospel her husband Gregory, who became a devoted bishop." Their firstborn son they consecrated to the service of God; and the influence of a pious education, and of the knowledge of this early consecration, remained with him "while exposed during the years of his youth, which he spent at Athens, to the contagion of the Paganism which there prevailed." This son grew up to be the celebrated Gregory of Nazianzum. So, too, we read that "the pious Anthusa, of Antioch, retired from the bustle of the great world, to which she belonged by her condition, into the still retreat of domestic life. Having lost her husband at the age of twenty, from regard to his memory, and a desire to devote herself wholly to the education of her son, she chose to remain a widow; and it was owing in part to this early pious and careful education that the boy became afterwards so well known as the great church teacher, John Chrysostom." Well may the historian say, "To make their children early acquainted with the Holy Scriptures was considered by such mothers as a task which belonged peculiarly to them."[1]

[1] Neander.

In a later age, a remarkable instance of the power of a mother's piety, in the early training of children, is found in the life of Bernard of Clairvaux. That he remained all his life a devoted adherent of the papacy, is unhappily true; but it is also true that in the midst of the thick darkness in which he lived, and in which he himself was often bewildered and led astray, his religious belief was far more in accordance with the doctrines of Protestantism than with those of the corrupt church to which he belonged. It is matter for devout gratitude, that even in the twelfth century a monk and a bigoted ecclesiastic could be found inveighing against the worship of images, and teaching the doctrine of justification by faith.

His mother appears to have been a woman of true piety, though tinged with the Romish superstition; and, having consecrated her son to the service of the church, to have paid especial attention to his religious instruction. She died while he was yet young, and for a time he lost the fervent feelings which had been produced under her training. But her memory held sway over his heart, though she was no more, and after many struggles, he became a monk. We cannot but deplore that his religious zeal should have been thus perverted. It is sad to think that youthful energy should be wasted and made morbid in the unhealthy seclusion of the monastery. But we must pity rather than blame him. Individually he became, by that Divine grace which sometimes works amid the most unpromising external circumstances, a truly pious and devoted man. His labours, in what he believed to be the cause of Christ, were indefatigable, and his sermons are full of the choicest utterances of intense and holy

desire towards God. Luther, who was no friend to monks and monasteries, said of him,—"If ever there lived on earth a God-fearing and holy monk, it was Bernard of Clairvaux."

The great reformer himself was much indebted to his early training for what he afterwards became. John Luther, his father, "was an upright, straightforward, hard-working man, with a firmness of character bordering on obstinacy." But the Eisleben miner was a man of more cultivated mind than was then usual with persons in his station of life. Books were scarce and expensive, but he was fond of reading, and, as far as his means would go, he lost no opportunity of procuring them. "They were his relaxation in the intervals of repose from hard and long-continued labour."[1]

His mother seems to have been a woman of noble character. Virtuous and honourable in her conduct, "she was remarked in particular for her modesty, her fear of God, and her spirit of prayer. The mothers of the place regarded her as a model whom they ought to imitate."[2]

When subsequently John Luther attained a better position in life as the reward of his industry, he availed himself of it "to cultivate the society which he preferred. He set great value on educated men, and often invited the clergymen and teachers of the place to his table." This home training was not lost upon Martin.

Estimating at its true value early religious instruction, his parents, as soon as he was of an age to be taught, "sought to give him the knowledge and inspire him with the fear of God, and train him in

[1] D'Aubigné. [2] *Ibid.*

Christian virtues. Their utmost care was devoted to his primary domestic education." "And," adds the eloquent historian of the Reformation, "the piety of the parents, their activity and strict virtue, gave a happy impulse to the boy, making him of a grave and attentive spirit."

Although this home training was not the immediate means of leading him to a full knowledge of the gospel, and though the discipline employed was often needlessly and even cruelly severe, so that "the only religious sentiment which could be discovered in him was that of fear," there can be little doubt that it prepared the way for that "better hope" of which afterwards he was to become the great evangelist. To the end of his life he gratefully acknowledged the wise teaching and the holy influence of his mother in those early days. Humanly speaking, but for the piety of his parents, and his father's love of learning, Martin Luther would have lived and died an ignorant miner in the little town of Eisleben.

As we descend to later times, recorded instances of the good effects of early religious discipline multiply rapidly: it will be necessary, therefore, to select those which most fully illustrate the principles already laid down.

The "Life of Philip Henry," from which quotations have already been made, furnishes striking evidence of the value of parental teaching and training. "He did much towards the instruction of his children in the way of familiar discourse, according to that excellent directory for religious education, Deut. vi. 7, which made them love home and delight in his company, and greatly endeared religion to them."

His method of teaching was that which was best adapted to awaken their interest in religious truth. He avoided burdening their memories and exciting their disgust by requiring them to learn large portions of the Scripture as a task, and sought rather to make the whole contents of the word of God familiar to them, "especially the Scripture histories." "He also," says his son, "allowed his children a great deal of freedom with him," more, probably, than the somewhat rigid notions of the time permitted; but he turned this to good account, for it "gave him the opportunity of reasoning with them, and not frightening them into that which was good."

His plan was to induce them to read the Scripture, and discover its truths for themselves, at the same time keeping a strict watch upon their progress. He encouraged them to collect and to write down such passages of Scripture as struck their attention in reading, or which they thought most important. And though "this performance was very small," as his son quaintly adds, "yet the endeavour was of great use." He adopted the same plan as to their general reading, keeping the selection of books in his own hands.

This training, under the Divine blessing, had its desired effect. All his children grew up in the fear of God. The result, as it appears in the subsequent career of his son Matthew, the well-known commentator, is very strikingly exhibited. He remained under his father's care, and even under his roof, till he was about eighteen years of age, and had from him the greatest advantages in point of education. "I venture to say," writes his biographer, "the helps he had for furnishing himself in the knowledge of things

human and Divine, in his father's house, contributed more to his fitness for the ministry than all the advantages he enjoyed in another place."[1]

The circumstances, it is true, were exceptional, and the opportunity of giving such an education at home is confined to comparatively few. But the moral training here was the chief thing, and that is a work possible to all. He always spoke under the deepest sense of obligation to his parents in respect to this. One of his private papers, containing an enumeration of "mercies received," and a "thankful acknowledgment of them," mentions particularly,—

"That I have had, and still have, comfort more than ordinary in my relations, that I am blessed with such parents as few have.

"That I had religious education, the principles of religion, instilled into me *with my very milk*, and from a child have been taught the good knowledge of God."

His record of his father's death, in his diary, is one of the most touching and simple utterances of the heart to be found in the whole scope of our religious literature. He thus writes, July 1, 1696:—"I bless God that I ever had such a father, whose temper was so very happy, and his gifts and graces so very bright, one that recommended religion and the power of godliness by a cheerful and endearing conversation, that had himself, and taught others, the art of obliging: I bless God I had him so long, that he was not removed from me when I was a child; that I have not been left to myself to be a grief and heaviness to him. Nothing made me differ from the worst but the free grace of God. To that grace be the glory of all the

[1] Life, by W. Tong.

benefit that my father was to me, and the comfort I was to him."

"I have a great deal of reason to be humbled and ashamed that I have profited and improved no more by my relation to so good a man, that I have not so well transcribed that fair copy of humility, meekness, candour, and zealous piety. Oh that the remembrance of him may have a greater influence upon me than the personal converse had!"

Of his mother, who survived her holy and honoured husband some years, he says, "She continued to the last, at her house at Broad Oak (where she was born), a great example of wisdom, piety, and usefulness, and abounding in good works. I think I may say, in her sphere and capacity, she was not inferior to what my father was in his. She was very happy in a constant calmness and serenity of mind, not easily to be disturbed, which, as it was a singular gift of the Divine grace, and an instance of her wisdom, so it contributed much to her close and comfortable walking with God, and her doing good."

His own early piety, his laborious and holy life, show how well he learned the lessons thus set before him, and how deep and hallowing an influence was exerted upon his character by the training and teaching which he had received.

Contemporary with Philip Henry was a man whose name is almost a synonyme for fervent piety and Christian devotedness, "the holy Mr. Baxter." His father, who was originally a man of fair property, had, by his riotous living, greatly impoverished himself; but with commendable thrift he set himself to repair his losses by great care and frugality. We may conclude

from this that he was a man of some decision and strength of character. But a more important change was wrought in him than any which concerned his outward life merely. He became a reader of the Scriptures, and, by their means, a truly converted man. It is remarkable that this change took place about the time, or not long before, his son Richard was born. We trace here, with devout thankfulness, the hand of God. The child was born for a high position, a noble work; and the great Disposer of hearts so ordered it, that the fitting instrumentality should be provided to train him for it. It was to his father that he was indebted for the instruction which produced his earliest religious convictions. We can hardly be wrong in supposing that the father felt the training of a child, born at a period of such solemn interest to himself, to be a work peculiarly committed to him. And it illustrates the principle already stated, that the *character* of parents is of the greatest importance in the training of their children, when we find that his conduct in the family, which won for him the reproach of the ungodly as a Puritan and hypocrite, "gave additional effect to his conversation." It does not appear that the impressions thus produced on Richard Baxter's mind, at a very early period of life, issued in his immediate conversion; but those "feelings and convictions, though often like the morning cloud and early dew, were never entirely dissipated, and at last fully established themselves in a permanent influence on his character."[1]

Dr. Doddridge's early instruction in Scripture history by his mother, by means of the Dutch tiles then commonly to be seen in fireplaces, is a picture of

[1] Orme's "Life of Richard Baxter."

home-life with which most readers are familiar. But it is a very suggestive incident, and will bear to be referred to here. Both his parents were pious, and this wise use of common circumstances indicates on their part a conscientious thoughtfulness as to the duty of religious teaching and the method of discharging it. Ungodly or neglectful parents would not have known how to use the opportunity thus put into their hands. Yet it is by seizing and turning to good account opportunities of this kind, that religious instruction in the earlier days of childhood is best given. The inquisitive, open mind of the child, unprejudiced by any foregone conclusions, willingly receives both fact and instruction; but it does so most readily when they are communicated in an informal manner. It is by familiar conversation, arising out of the ordinary incidents of life, rather than by set lessons, that children gain their most valuable religious knowledge. Indeed, most children should, by means of pictures or familiar conversation, be acquainted with the most important elements of that knowledge before they are able to learn it from books.

The effects of Doddridge's early training seem to have remained with him through life, and especially to have influenced his conduct towards his own children. "He behaved to them," says his biographer, "in an affectionate and condescending manner; encouraged them to use a proper degree of freedom with him, and carefully avoided that *forbidding air* which would have kept them at a distance, and rendered his instructions less pleasing and acceptable. He was very solicitous to take every opportunity of impressing their minds with pious and virtuous sentiments." The following

extract from his private papers shows us what he himself felt, and how he resolved to fulfil his duty towards them:—"As a father, it shall be my care to intercede for my children daily; to converse with them often upon some religious subject; to drop some short hints of the serious kind when there is not room for large discourse; to pray sometimes with them separately; to endeavour to bring them early to communion with the church; to study to oblige them and secure their affection."

This ardent desire for their highest welfare, as well as the happy result of his efforts in their training, is beautifully expressed in one of his letters to his daughter, then at school. "I cannot," he writes to her, "let the anniversary of your birthday pass without one line of most affectionate congratulation. I have been blessing God for his goodness to you, my lovely girl, and to me and your mamma in you. I have been earnestly recommending you to the Divine blessing, and praying that the years of your life may be multiplied long beyond the boundaries of mine, and that they may all be crowned with lovingkindness and tender mercy. And now, my dear, let me tell you, if a hasty word can tell you, how much I love you, how much I delight in you, how earnestly I long to see you. . . . Above all does it delight us to think there is room to hope that you are a child of God, that you love him as a Father, and have sought and found that salvation in Christ which is more than ten thousand worlds. It is this, my dear love, it is this that comforts my heart in the midst of that solicitude which so much affection as it feels would inspire." Truly we may say, in the words of the Psalmist, as we

contemplate such blessed results of early home training in the paths of piety, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children."

The early training of the Wesley family had undoubtedly a very decided influence on the character and career of some of its members. The education of her children fell almost entirely upon the mother, whose faithfulness to her charge ought to make her name honourable to all generations. She possessed an extraordinary aptitude for business, and thus, notwithstanding the heavy duties which her large family devolved upon her, she seems to have found sufficient time for the accurate discharge of them all. Her son John, the celebrated founder of Methodism, mentions "the calm serenity with which his mother transacted business, wrote letters, and conversed, surrounded by her *fifteen* children." She "devoted as great a proportion of time as she could to discourse with each of her children, separately, every night in the week, upon the duties and hopes of Christianity." John's providential deliverance from the fire which destroyed their house when he was only six years old, gave him an especial interest in her thoughts; and among her private papers, one was found after her death, "in which she expressed in prayer her intention to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child, which God had so mercifully provided for, that she might instil into him the principles of true religion and virtue." "Lord," she wrote, "give me grace to do it sincerely and prudently, and bless my attempts with good success."

It may be interesting here to examine a little more

closely the plans adopted by this remarkable woman, and which were attended with such good results. Ample material for doing so will be found in a letter which she wrote to her son, the Rev. John Wesley, in compliance with his request, which gives a detailed account of them. Some of her rules will be more fully referred to in a subsequent chapter.

The first thing Mrs. Wesley aimed at was to subdue the will of her children, not by harshness or violence, but by kind and timely firmness. And this discipline was commenced so early, that they grew up in the habit of dependence upon their parents, and of implicit obedience to them. At the same time, though thus early taught to rely upon the judgment and authority of their parents in all things, they were not merely dependent. She endeavoured to train them from their earliest infancy in habits of *self-control.* They were even taught to "*cry softly,*" as well as to put restraint upon their appetites and passions. And "they were quickly made to understand that they should have nothing they cried for."

It will be readily supposed that religious instruction had a prominent place in her plan. The great importance which she attached to the subjugation of the will arose from her opinion, or rather conviction, that self-will is "the root of all sin and misery," and that, therefore, "whatever cherishes this in children insures their wretchedness and irreligion; whatever checks and mortifies it promotes their future happiness and piety." As soon as they could speak, they were taught the Lord's Prayer, which they said regularly morning and evening, "to which, as they grew older, were added a short prayer for their parents, and some

portion of Scripture, as their memories could bear. They were very early made to distinguish the sabbath from other days."

One result of great value was secured by her training: her children must have learned very early to put implicit confidence in the justice as well as in the kindness of their parents. No sinful action, no fault was allowed to pass unpunished, yet free confession and promise of amendment, if any were charged with a fault, were allowed to save them from punishment. If a fault was amended, the child was never upbraided with it afterwards. It was forgotten as well as forgiven. Acts of obedience and efforts to please were kindly accepted, and they were instructed how to do better for the future. They must have felt that their parents would never do them injustice, nor suffer any to be done. This is a great point. The fundamental basis of parental discipline must be fair and even-handed justice, "without partiality and without hypocrisy." Each child must be able to feel that he has in his parents not only loving and affectionate friends, who will sacrifice anything for his welfare, but also that they will not, for him or for any of his brothers and sisters, do anything that is unfair or unjust. And this may be done without presenting parental authority in a forbidding aspect.

The effect of this training we all know. It is not too much to say that the higher qualities of the Wesleys, those which afterwards made them great, began to be developed under the fostering care of that mother in their early infancy. Nor did her care cease when they left their home. "Into all situations she followed them with her prayers and counsels; and

her sons, even when they became men and scholars, found the utility of her wise and parental instructions. They proposed to her their doubts, and consulted her in all their difficulties." [1]

Remarkable as the result was in their case, it is one which may encourage all parents who, with like faithfulness, endeavour to rule and train their children for God. The Divine assurance is clear and positive, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." [2] On no labour may we more confidently look for God's blessing than on faithful and wise efforts to fulfil the claims of parental duty. We cannot indeed insure results. Without spiritual renewal all will be in vain. But we are encouraged to hope and believe that the highest results will be secured to us. Some lamentable failures among those who have been piously trained teach us our absolute dependence on almighty grace; but even these do not prove that the labour has been altogether useless. Many such failures only appear to be so for a time, and the great number of known instances, both in private life and in the lives of public men, of the most blessed success, encourage us to labour and pray with confident hope that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Often the result desired, though delayed, is not denied. The seed is buried, but not lost. Some circumstance, in after life, revives the old impressions, renews the childish convictions, and brings back the forgetter of God's ways into the paths of righteousness. It often happens, when the subsoil is brought

[1] Dove's "Wesley Family;" Southey's "Life of Wesley."
[2] Prov. xxii. 6.

to the surface, that plants and flowers appear which did not grow on that spot before. How long, in such cases, must the buried germ have retained its vitality! The good seed of the kingdom is thus buried, but it is not therefore destroyed. Sooner or later that seed is brought under Divine and quickening influences, and made to bring forth fruit. Gilbert West, best known by his book on the resurrection of our Lord, was for many years an infidel. In studying that subject for the purpose of strengthening his unbelief, it pleased God to lead him to find in it an irresistible argument in favour of Christianity. But this was not all. In a letter to Dr. Doddridge he says, "I cannot help taking notice of your remarks" (in the "Life of Colonel Gardiner") "upon the advantage of an early education in the principles of religion, because I have myself most happily experienced it; since I owe to the early care of a most excellent woman, my mother, that bent and bias to religion which, with the co-operating grace of God, hath at length brought me back to those paths of peace from whence I might have otherwise been in danger of deviating for ever."

The mother of the Haldanes was a woman of decided piety, and made it her chief aim to bring up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Her elder son never forgot how, when he and his brother were in bed and supposed to be asleep, his mother used to kneel down beside them, and pray earnestly that the Lord would be pleased to guide them through that world which she felt she was soon to leave; that their lives might be devoted to his service on earth, and that they might be brought at last to his everlasting kingdom. She died before her younger son

was six years old. More than twenty years elapsed, and then the two brothers, whose lives had been spent amid the gaieties of a worldly life, were brought simultaneously, though by different ways, to seek "the good part." How remarkably their mother's prayers were fulfilled in their after-life of consecration to the service of God, their biography bears the fullest witness.

Dr. Payson's mother was a woman of deep piety, and to her he attributed, under God, his religious hopes and all his usefulness. But it was not till his twenty-second year that those instructions and that Christian nurture had their result in his true conversion to God. The death of his brother led him to think seriously. His mother's fears respecting his own state, expressed in a letter written to him communicating the sad event, brought back old impressions, and led him to prayer. In the following year he publicly made a profession of faith in Christ.

To an American clergyman we are indebted for the following striking instance of the revival of early impressions, resulting in true conversion. In the course of his duty he was called to visit a sailor apparently dying, and whose illness was the result of his licentious conduct. With an oath the sick man bade him begone, and not harass his dying bed. While the clergyman endeavoured to speak to him, the man remained sullen and silent, pretending to sleep. Repeated visits seemed to produce no better effect. One day, however, an expression which he used led the clergyman to suppose that he was a Scotchman. To ascertain the fact he repeated, from the Scotch version of the Psalms, the words,—

"Such pity as a father hath
Unto his children dear,
Like pity shows the Lord to such
As worship him in fear."

The apparently hardened sinner's heart was touched by the well-known words. Tears came into his eyes. The clergyman saw his opportunity, and ventured an allusion to his mother. The poor prodigal burst into tears. He admitted that he was the child of a praying mother, who had often commended him to God. He no longer refused religious instruction, and after his recovery, his instructor had the satisfaction of believing that he was a truly humble, sincere Christian.

Captain Allen Gardiner, whose untimely loss in the service of the Patagonian mission will be long remembered, and whose piety, zeal, and self-sacrifice so fully testified to the power of Christ's love in his heart, was the child of pious parents. Save, however, for the very occasional use of some religious phrase,—as, for example, when he ascribed his preservation in danger to his mother's prayers,—he seems to have grown up quite indifferent to personal religion. He became a professed infidel and a scoffer, and as daring in sin as he afterwards was fearless in duty. But there was an influence deep and permanent, as, for the most part, it was silent and unperceived, which remained with him through the wildest seasons of his early life. And though years passed by without any apparent change, the early training was keeping his heart open to religious impressions. "Two letters, one from his father, the other from a lady, who, for his mother's sake, had been deeply interested in his welfare, were the means used by God in bringing about the great change." He

became a sincere and devoted Christian, and, disciplined by trial, was eminently faithful in service. But who can doubt that this Divine change and life of service were the result and reward of parental training and parental prayers?

Examples of a similar character might be greatly multiplied. There is scarcely a Christian biography that does not, in some form or other, bear testimony to the value of Christian home-life, to the power and the blessed results of early Christian teaching and training. Here the father, there the mother, or perhaps a pious servant or sister, has been the means of implanting in the heart of the child the germ of truth, which God in secret and silence has preserved and nurtured to everlasting life. Newton says of his mother, "She made it the chief business and pleasure of her life to instruct me, and bring me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Was not his life, after years of such strange wandering and rebellion, her reward? Cecil bears testimony,—"I find in myself another evidence of the greatness of parental influence. I detect myself to this day laying down maxims in my family, which I took up at three or four years of age, before I could possibly know the reason of them." Again: "The implantation of principles is of unspeakable importance, especially when culled from time to time out of the Bible. The child feels his parents' authority supported by the Bible, and the authority of the Bible supported by his parents' weight and influence. . . A man can very seldom get rid of these principles. They stand in his way. He wishes to forget them, perhaps; but it is impossible. Where parental influence does not convert, it hampers. It

hangs on the wheels of evil."[1] Bishop Hall's mother is described as "a woman of extraordinary piety." Of Richard Hooker, the learned author of "Ecclesiastical Polity," it is said, "These seeds of piety were so seasonably planted, and so continually watered with the daily dew of God's blessed Spirit, that his infant virtues grew into such holy habits, as did make him grow daily into more and more favour both with God and man."[2] The names of George Herbert, John Howe, Dr. Watts, John Foster, Robert Hall, men of very diverse intellectual character, and occupying very different positions in the church of God, will readily occur to many as proof of the high value of parental influence and teaching. In all these cases, and in many others which might be cited, either the father or the mother—often both—have been faithful to their duty in seeking to lead their children in the way of the Lord. And God has, in all ages, proved himself faithful to his promise, faithful to the gracious arrangements of family life, by giving them the reward of their pious solicitude, and making them, through their children, a blessing to all generations.

[1] Cecil, "Remains." [2] Life, by Walton.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER—PERSONAL HABITS.

THE formation of character is, after all, the great object of education. What a child is, will always, to the right-thinking parent, be a more important consideration than what he knows, even though the question relate to religious knowledge. Nothing is done if this be left undone. No amount of learning or accomplishments can compensate for serious defects here. The wise man teaches us the relation of both these important aspects of parental duty when, addressing his own son, he says, "I have *taught* thee in the way of wisdom; I have *led* thee in right paths."[1]

In this, as in all other things pertaining to our moral life, God graciously puts the highest blessing within our reach, even where he sees fit to deny those which, though more sought after, are really inferior. Who, on serious consideration, would prefer the material good to the spiritual? Who would not rather desire for his children that they should belong to

"A virtuous household, though exceeding poor,"

than that they should possess riches or greatness without the virtue? Who is not convinced that to educate his children in honesty, truth, industry,

[1] Prov. iv. 1.

usefulness, is of unmeasurably greater importance, even as to this life, than to secure for them, irrespective of these things, the highest positions earth could give? "If the fellow turns out well," writes John Foster on the birth of his son, "I shall not so much mind about his being extra clever. It is goodness that the world is wretched for wanting."

These considerations press with greatest force upon the child's spiritual relations and destiny. The formation of character for eternity is the most sacred and the noblest work which God has intrusted, instrumentally, to man. This is the work of parents. They are called upon, by the position they hold, to train immortal souls for the enjoyment and service of God for ever. They have these souls intrusted to them from the earliest period of their existence, so that they may seize the first opportunity of commencing their stupendous task. Every appliance for the work is theirs in the natural affection of the parent for the child, and the child for the parent. Every facility is given for it in the free and constant intercourse of home-life. Children naturally look to their parents for instruction and example; and of all influences to which they are subject, save that of the almighty Spirit of God, that which parents exert upon them is the deepest and most lasting. With such a duty, and such means for discharging it, the wisest and holiest may well feel burdened with responsibility. None will faithfully fulfil the duty but those who seek wisdom and strength from Him who has committed it to them.

In this view of the duty there is one most important consideration to be premised,—the absolute necessity

of the Holy Spirit's influence in order to that renewal, without which the formation of a Christian character is impossible. The parent who should exclude this from his thoughts in his highest wishes for his children's welfare has never truly discerned what their highest welfare is. And to attempt to form a Christian character by any mere human agency or influence, even by the wisest and most constant skill and watchfulness, apart from His gracious power, is the most egregious folly, and an insult to the Divine majesty. He may, it is true, in the exercise of his sovereign power renew the heart and form the character of the child whose parents have only been concerned to give an externally moral training; just as he may, in the exercise of the same sovereignty, make the most unlikely means effectual to conversion, and the most unlikely persons, according to human estimate, to become new creatures in Christ Jesus: but it is where earnest, faithful effort is combined with humble, watchful, believing prayer for the operation of his Divine Spirit on the heart, that we may look for the largest results. In such cases, the promise supports our prayer and justifies our highest hopes.

The absolute necessity of the Divine power to renew the heart, and the gracious promise of God to those who seek his Holy Spirit, cannot be too constantly recognised in the formation of character. Comparatively little observation and experience will show us the deep-rooted corruption of our sinful nature, and will scatter to the winds the figment of the native purity of childhood. Innocent, children are, inasmuch as they have neither the power

[illegible]he temptation to commit crime or to indulge

in vice: but the evil heart soon reveals itself; and the fondest parent, if he be also a wise and pious one, will mournfully recognise in the unfolding character of his child the manifestation of that corrupt nature over which he himself has to mourn. He will feel, too, how impotent he is in struggling with this evil. However careful and watchful he is, there is a point, soon reached, beyond which human skill is powerless. He cannot change the heart. He cannot quicken the soul to spiritual life. A higher, a Divine power, he feels, is needed here. He may till the soil and sow the seed, and water it with the utmost pains and wisdom; the conditions of culture and growth may be the most favourable; but the seed will rot in the ground if the Divine Spirit of God do not cause it to germinate. This is His prerogative. Our attitude must be one of humble hope that he will graciously impart that mysterious quickening power by which alone our labours can be made truly and eternally effectual.

Relying upon this, and constantly recognising its necessity, we may address ourselves to our important task with the highest hopes as to results. For while that quickening influence is absolutely necessary, so also has God enjoined upon us the use, not only of means, but of appropriate means—such as are shown, by experience and study, to be in accordance with the known laws of mental operation, and such as, arguing from a wide induction of facts, we may believe will, in all probability, be successful to the end designed. True, we cannot with certainty reckon upon their success. God graciously leaves the results uncertain, to stimulate our faith and energy, and to teach us, in all

things, dependence upon him. We must also bear in mind the numberless accidents which interfere with our operations in a world so full of sin and its accompanying disorder; accidents against which no human wisdom can provide, and which only Divine wisdom can overrule for good. But, in the majority of cases, the connection is observable between the right use of the means and success. Enough is certainly known to encourage us to the utmost diligence in forming the character of children according to the principles of the Divine word.

In seeking to fulfil this duty, we must remember, as has already been said, that *parental character* is of the first importance. So completely is the character of the child affected by the character of the parent, that it is hardly possible to say where the influence begins, still less where, if at all, it ends. There can be no doubt that disposition, for example, is to a great extent hereditary. The corruption of the fallen nature will display itself in the child as it has done in the parents, and it will probably take the direction of its development from them.

What is called the *natural* disposition, as distinct from the disposition modified by training, has its root here. A good temper—kindly, cheerful, buoyant, and generous; or a bad one—morose, sulky, or passionate, may be thus derived. But without training, the good disposition will speedily find some evil development under the influence of the corrupt will, while the bad will flourish of itself in deadly luxuriance.

Character, as distinct from the natural disposition, is a result of training. It is the natural disposition modified by education. And the knowledge of our-

selves, and the fact that tendencies are to a great extent hereditary, will help us in our work. Just as this knowledge does not diminish our personal responsibility, but increases it, making the task of self-discipline more possible to us, so the knowledge that our children are likely to resemble us in disposition may help us in training them. We know our own weak points, and we may thus more easily detect theirs. We know the direction of our own evil tendencies; we may thus learn more effectually to watch over them, and adapt our discipline to their need.

Viewed in this light, it is a question of the greatest moment for parents, not only "What is my natural disposition?" but "What is my actual character?" And it behoves them to exercise the greatest watchfulness that they do not cherish in themselves habits of thought or action, or any mental or moral tendencies, which they would grieve to see developed in their children. Whether parents are self-denying, orderly, self-governing, honourable, upright, pure in their whole life, in secret and in public, at home and abroad; or are lax, self-indulgent, selfish, and worldly, will make all the difference as to the influence for good or evil to which their children will be subjected, and by which, to a great extent, their characters will be formed.

A child's susceptibility to external impressions commences at the very dawn of life, and to the mother is intrusted the task of moulding it then for good or evil. With her hand, her voice, her manner the infant becomes earliest familiar, and with that familiarity commences its moral training. Its pain is soothed, its cries are hushed, its wants are supplied by her. A tender habit of mutual interest is thus

established, which grows with the child's rapidly growing intelligence, and which gives her an incalculable power in the formation of its character. And woe both to her and to the child, if the advantage thus put into her hands is either neglected or unwisely used!

But the father has, as the child advances in self-consciousness, an equally important share in this duty. He is the head of the family, its highest authority, the ultimate appeal in all points connected with its order and government. It is his to rule the household and have his children in subjection.[1] And his character and example will naturally have, by virtue of his position, great weight with his children. We all know how, with them, "Father said so," or "Father did so," is held to be an all-sufficient justification for any word or action. Most of us remember, too, the feeling of reverence with which, as children, we regarded our father. His word was law; his lightest act was invested with importance; his most trivial sayings had significance; his displeasure was a punishment; his approval happiness. What was there to us that he did not know?—what that he could not do? Where could any combination of excellences be found equalling his? Love to the mother and reverence for the father are the earliest emotions of which the child is conscious or capable.

What a mighty power for good is thus put into the parents' hands! and how watchful and prayerful ought we to be that nothing in us interferes with its right use! From our lips, our looks, our actions, all of which the child deems perfect, all of which it

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 4.

thinks it has a right to adopt as its own, it learns its first lessons of good or evil. Modes of feeling, thinking, and acting, life-long in their influence, will thus be unconsciously acquired by the child during the early years of mental susceptibility. The child's character will reflect, with almost photographic fidelity, the example and influence of its parents.

Of the parents of James Montgomery it is said,—"With them the love of the Redeemer was the beginning and the crown of all wisdom; and it was their heart's desire and prayer to God that it might be so with their children. Their life enforced their teachings; and its sincerity, its simplicity, and its beauty left impressions upon the tender and susceptible heart of James that were never erased."

The following account of the mother of George Herbert enables us to understand the kind of influence which was exerted upon his childhood, and which helped materially to prepare him for his after-life of holy labour and song. His father died when he was about four years old, and his mother, "being desirous to give Edward, her eldest son, such advantages of learning and other education as might suit his birth and fortune, and thereby make him the more fit for the service of his country, did, at his being of a fit age, remove from Montgomery Castle with him and some of her younger sons to Oxford; and having entered Edward into Queen's College, and provided him a fit tutor, she commended him to his care. Yet she continued there with him, and still kept him in a moderate awe of herself, and so much under her own eye as to see and converse with him daily: but she managed this power over him without any such rigid sourness as

might make her company a torment to her child; but with such a sweetness and compliance with the recreations and pleasures of youth as did incline him willingly to spend much of his time in the company of his dear and careful mother, which was to her great content: for she would often say, 'that as our bodies take a nourishment suitable to the meat on which we feed, so our souls do as insensibly take in vice by the example or conversation with wicked company:' and would therefore as often say, 'that ignorance of vice was the best preservation of virtue; and that the very knowledge of wickedness was as tinder to inflame and kindle sin, and to keep it burning.' For these reasons she endeared him to her own company, and continued with him in Oxford four years; in which time her great and harmless wit, her cheerful gravity, and her obliging behaviour, gained her an acquaintance and friendship with most of any eminent worth or learning that were at that time in or near that university."[1]

Among eminent men who have been indebted to a mother's care for their subsequent success, the name of Sir William Jones stands prominent. To her he owed not only much of the influence which is always of such great value in the formation of character, but also much of the instruction which prepared him for the high position he afterwards attained. Her husband died when William was only three years old; but she wisely set herself to work for her son's future, and though "urgently and repeatedly solicited by the Countess of Macclesfield to remain at Sherborne Castle, she politely but firmly declined the invitation," that

[1] Walton's "Life of George Herbert."

she might carry out her plans for his education. These she pursued with such vigour and success that, "at so early an age as that of eighteen, we find him, when at home, of which he was very fond, reading the best authors in Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese, following in all respects the plan of education recommended by Milton; . . . and thus, to use his own words, 'with the fortune of a peasant giving him the education of a prince.'" "Read, and you will know," was her constant reply to his childish inquiries; while she assisted him in the selection of those books which were "adapted to his taste and capacity."

Of his religious education little is recorded, save that she taught him the Creed and the Ten Commandments. But he was early accustomed to read the Bible, and in his fifth year received an impression from a passage in the Revelation, which was never effaced. Well might he say, "Let not the maternal heart and hand, which trained up the man when yet a child, ever be forgotten."

That example is more powerful than precept, is, with children especially, as true as it is trite, and as important as it is true. The carelessly uttered word, the action thoughtlessly done, will often be more powerful than the best direct teaching or discipline. On this point a wise and thoughtful writer has said, "Your conversation with your friends, the business you transact, the likings and dislikings you express,—these will educate them. Whatever be your rank or situation in life, your house, your table, and your daily behaviour there, these will educate them. To withdraw them from the unceasing and potent influence of these things is impossible, except you were to with-

draw yourself from them also. Every parent, therefore, save when separated altogether from his family, may be seen daily in the act of educating his children; for from father and mother, and the *circumstances* in which they move, the children are daily advancing in the knowledge of what is good and evil."[1] How appropriate in this light the pious resolve of the Psalmist!—"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."[2]

A striking instance of the power of the parent in the formation of character is furnished by the life of Sir T. F. Buxton. "His holidays," says his son and biographer, "spent at Earl's Colne, where his mother continued to reside, left a deeper trace in his after-life than the time spent at school." He himself thus describes his mother's character, and in the picture thus drawn we recognise the lineaments of the son:—"My mother was a woman of a very vigorous mind, and possessing many of the generous virtues in a very high degree. She was large-minded about everything; disinterested almost to an excess; careless of difficulty, labours, danger, or expense, in the prosecution of any great object." Those who are familiar with his life will at once see with what fidelity his mother's character is reflected in his own.

"Her aim appears to have been to give her boys a manly and robust character; and both by precept and example she strove to render them self-denying, and at the same time thoughtful for others." In her son Thomas this aim was certainly realized. Even before he became the subject of a true change of heart, and while exposed to the temptations of a university

[1] Anderson, "Domestic Constitution." [2] Psa. ci. 2.

life, "the Christian principles which his mother had instilled into his mind retained their influence over him." His "daring, violent, domineering temper," as he himself described it, his mother controlled by the exercise of great firmness. In her system of education she allowed great liberty to her sons, but little indulgence. They might learn to act for themselves, but her authority was always fully maintained.

The influence of her training was evident in all his after-life. He acquired in his childhood a habit of self-government which went a long way towards making him one of the most persevering men of business, and one of the most laborious philanthropists of his day. "I constantly feel," he wrote to his mother, during the time of his most active occupation in London, "especially in action and exertion for others, the effects of principles early planted by you in my mind." But not only in public life did he prove the benefits of his early training. When he was made by Divine grace a partaker of the hopes of the gospel, he became as energetic a Christian as he had been before a man of business. His life at home, as well as abroad, proved the reality and fervour of his piety. His manly straightforwardness, refined by Christian courtesy, gave a charm to all his intercourse. "Simplicity and godly sincerity" were evident in all his actions. His native force of character, almost amounting at times to impetuousness, was tempered and adorned with "the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

In endeavouring to form the character of a child, the cultivation of good habits is of the utmost importance; not merely those which relate to the external conduct, but those also which have to do with

modes of thinking and feeling. Reverence, truthfulness, forethought, kindness, ought to be habits of the mind, as much as cleanliness should be a habit of the body. And in order to this, children must be trained in them. They will not come of themselves. They must not be left to chance teaching. From earliest childhood no pains must be spared to form right habits of thinking, feeling, and acting.

The first and most important of these is a habit of reverence for holy things. The very name of God ought to be associated in the mind from the earliest dawn of reason with a feeling of awe; not, indeed, of terror, for that is not compatible with love, but of deep reverence. The word of God they must be taught to regard as sacred, not to be read except with seriousness; while, at the same time, every effort is made to awaken an interest in its contents. The public worship of God (to which children may be very early accustomed) they should be taught to look upon as a solemn act, and one which cannot be rightly attended to in a careless or irreverent spirit. Familiarity with the most sacred names and things is quite compatible with this feeling. This reverence is not born of ignorance, but of wisely imparted knowledge. It is not a reverence for the mere name, for the external service, for the book, that we must cultivate, but for the spiritual realities which they represent,—a reverence of esteem which, so far as the child's capacity will allow, apprehends the grounds upon which it is based. Out of this feeling the fitting external manifestation of it will, with care, easily grow; and where a child is wisely trained in such reverence, it will be a source of untold blessings to him. One of our surest

safeguards against the growth of a shameless scepticism will be found in a loving reverence for sacred names and things early implanted in the susceptible mind of the child.

Need we point out here the great value of example in the formation of this habit? The child of thoughtless, irreligious, or even negligent parents will not be likely to grow up in the habit of reverence for holy things, and will have no just estimate of their importance. On the other hand, it is hardly possible that a child, accustomed to witness such reverence in those whom he first learns to love and obey, should grow up in utter irreverence or carelessness. Before he can grasp the mysteries of revelation, or form any adequate conception of its profound truths, his religious character is being developed. The influences surrounding it are operating through every fibre of its nature, shaping, so far as human instrumentality can do it, its future habits of thought and action.

Christian parents will be anxious to see their children grow up in a habit of truthfulness; but more is included in this than mere abstinence from verbal lying: strict accuracy of speech is obviously to be required, but for this sincerity is requisite. And sincerity implies an open, transparent habit of mind, free from all duplicity or guile. Anything like concealment or prevarication is to be regarded in nearly as serious a light as direct and wilful falsehood. The wilful and habitual liar is comparatively rare, and his vice is so soon discovered and so deservedly punished by the abhorrence of all honest men, that few will continue to be deceived by him; but the habit of concealing the truth, or any part of it, of twisting it to our own

advantage, of taking off the edge of it when it would tell against ourselves, and putting a sharper point to the fact which is in our favour, is not so uncommon, and is one which cannot be too strongly deprecated. Against the growth of this in children, those who have the training of them must most carefully watch. It is painful to observe how early the tendency to untruthfulness develops itself. A child commits a fault, and is found out; it immediately commences its defence, a defence which is usually in some way or other made at the expense of truth. It did not mean to do it, or somebody else told it to do it, or it could not help doing it. The sin and the excuse of Adam are acted over again in his posterity, and it is only by means of religious education that this propensity is overcome. If this is commenced early enough, the habit of truthfulness may be developed in a child along with the faculty of speech; if not, a habit of falsehood may grow with the growth of the child's mental capacities, and corrupt all its nature.

A useful hint is contained on this subject in one of Mrs. Wesley's "bye-laws" for the management of her children. She says, "It had been observed that cowardice and fear of punishment often lead children into lying, till they get a custom of it which they cannot leave. To prevent this, a law was made, that whoever was charged with a fault of which they were guilty, if they would *ingenuously confess* it and promise to amend, should not be beaten. This rule prevented a great deal of lying."

But accuracy of speech, the accordance of the word with the fact, must also be strictly required. The "exaggeration is next in enormity to that of

deception. Indeed, it is a species of deception, though too often considered harmless. Children should be expected to give strictly accurate representations of what they see or hear, of what they think or feel. There is the more need to be watchful over this, because it is a fault which many of the tendencies of the present day concur to make fashionable. Exaggeration meets us on every hand. The great aim is *effect*, and often with little care how it is produced. Our popular literature is vitiated by this tendency; it is nothing if it be not startling. Somehow or other a book must produce a sensation, and so plain, sober truth is sacrificed to mere brilliancy; as if, to catch the vulgar eye, the artist should array his chaste and graceful statue in the tinsel robes of the popish Madonna.

Children soon acquire this habit; and if it be not early checked, still more if it be applauded and thought clever, it so grows upon them that they become unable to distinguish the fact which they have seen or heard from the fiction based on it which their own minds have created. Sad instances will occur to the memories of most readers, of men who have suffered this habit to master them, who, having begun by colouring their facts for effect, have ended in an exaggerated style of talking, which leads others to question the facts themselves. "Simplicity and godly sincerity"[1] must be the Christian's aim in all his life, in all his words; and this is the spirit which the Christian parent must, at any expense of pains and watchfulness, cultivate in his children.

It is hardly necessary to say that, if children are to be

[1] 2 Cor. i. 12.

trained in habits of truthfulness, parents must be themselves strictly true in their habits of speaking and acting. They must themselves be above all arts of deception. Their life and conduct must be clear as the sun at noonday. It is related of Robert Hall, that on one occasion, "while he was spending an evening at the house of a friend, a lady, who was there on a visit, retired, that her little girl of four years old might go to bed. She returned in about half an hour, and said to a lady near her, 'She is gone to sleep. I put on my night-cap, and lay down by her, and she soon dropped off.' Mr. Hall, who overheard this, said, 'Excuse me, madam, do you wish your child to grow up a liar?' 'Oh dear, no, sir! I should be shocked at such a thing.' 'Then bear with me while I say you must never *act* a lie before her. Children are very quick observers, and soon learn that that which assumes to be what it is not is a lie, whether acted or spoken.' This was uttered with a kindness which precluded offence, yet with a seriousness which could not be forgotten."[1]

In order to this, it will also be necessary to insist upon carefulness in observation as well as in speaking. Sometimes a child contracts a habit of untruthfulness from mere carelessness. A natural dulness of apprehension, or, on the other hand, an excessive quickness, may thus prove a snare. Some children, too, unconsciously mingle their own thoughts about a fact with the fact itself, and thus, even without designing to do so, get into the habit of misrepresentation. Tney must, therefore, be taught to observe

[1] Memoir, by Dr. Gregory.

carefully and relate accurately. The well-known anecdote of Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale so aptly illustrates this point that its repetition here may be very readily excused. "Accustom your children," he said to Mrs. Thrale, "constantly to this: if a thing happened at one window, and they, when relating it, say that it happened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them; you do not know where deviation from truth will end." Mrs. Thrale objected to so strict an application of the principle, and replied, "Nay, this is too much. . . . Little variations in narrative must happen a thousand times a day if one is not perpetually watching." Johnson rejoined, "Well, madam, and you *ought* to be perpetually watching. It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentional lying that there is so much falsehood in the world."

The value of truthfulness in the ordinary affairs of life, even apart from the judgment of the Divine law, will justify our urging this point somewhat strongly. What character so despicable, and at the same time so mischievous, as that of the man whose habit it is to deceive, first of all, others, and finally himself? We do not know the mischief there is in a lie. For want of a strict adherence to truth in the representation of common facts, families may be involved in misery, and the peace of happy homes be broken up by evil suspicions and unfounded jealousies. A colouring given to an apparently simple statement of fact, a trifling exaggeration of some point of detail, even an emphasis thrown on some particular word, may make all the difference between truth and falsehood, may involve the innocent in punishment, or shield the

guilty. When once this blight gets into a house, all confidence, all security is gone,—

> "For liars we can never trust,
> Though they may say the thing that's true."

At any cost of pains and trouble, and, if need be, by severe discipline, children must be taught to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," on all occasions; and never, by sign or act, by exaggeration or suppression, or even by false emphasis, attempt to deceive. Let it be added, that parents themselves must thoroughly and transparently, in all their intercourse with their children, practise the virtue they seek to cultivate in them.

The habit of *duly valuing time* should be very early encouraged. A stated period for lessons or for work, brief it may be and ought to be at first, but rigidly adhered to, will insensibly impress upon the mind of the child that life is made to be used, not wasted. The early years must be principally given to exercise and play, but it would be worse than cruel to let even those years pass without, in some way or other, awakening the thought that life had graver employment in store.

As children grow older this lesson may be still more strictly enforced. Dreamy, desultory habits in a child are a sure preparation for a wasted, useless life. And what can be more lamentable than the sight of a listless, apathetic, indolent young man or woman, who seems to have no idea that life is designed for the accomplishment of great duties, whose only mode of employing time is in idle talk, or idle reading, or in dreaming of chances in life more improbable

than the absurdest imaginings of the lowest class of fiction?

The cultivation of *industrious habits* will best help to prevent this. "Time is the seed-plot of eternity." The inspired Book teaches us the lesson in yet more forcible terms—"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."[1] To learn to do something worth doing, and to do it well, is one great lesson of childhood. Children will soon be able to take part in domestic duties, or in doing offices of kindness; or if their chief attention is occupied in the work of education, they may be taught to look upon that not as a drudgery but as a duty, a wise employment of the spring-time of life, necessary to their own well-being and to the happiness of those they love. It is a heavy price for parents to pay for negligence in this matter, to see their children growing up into useless, idle, despised men and women.

When Edward Bickersteth, the well-known Rector of Watton, left home to begin the battle of life, his mother's parting words were, "Be sure, Edward, that you never eat the bread of idleness." The parting injunction was in accordance with his previous training, and it may be safely said that he never rebelled against it.

"Be a whole man to everything," wrote J. J. Gurney to his son at school. "At Latin, be a whole man to Latin. At geometry or history, be a whole man to geometry or history. At play, be a whole man to play. At washing and dressing, be a whole man to washing and dressing. Above all, at meeting, be a whole man to worship."

[1] Gal. vi. 7.

Habits of *order and perseverance* are very closely connected with the preceding. Many a man is ruined, as to his prospects in life, because, although possessed of considerable ability, and even industry of a certain kind, he is fitful in his proceedings, and does not stick to his work. He is full of projects, but scanty of performances. He begins, but seldom finishes. Genius, a great man once said, is patience. This, like many other smart sayings, may be more striking than true; but it is true that genius—meaning by the word superior natural gifts—will be comparatively worthless without patience. The man who, whatever be his natural powers, will not "learn to labour and to wait," will always be an unsuccessful man. Life is full of examples of brilliant men left far behind, while the "slow and steady win the race."

Children should never be allowed to leave unfinished anything once begun, if the completion of it is within their power. If a boy begins to cut out a ship, see that he rigs it: give him help if he needs it, but see that he does it. It a girl begins a piece of work, see that the last stitch is put to it. If any branch of study is taken up spontaneously, see to it, if it be suitable to the child's age and capacity, that it be pursued with order and perseverance. Many clever families have gone to ruin for want of this grand condition of success. And the ruin might probably be traced to the want of training in these habits The untidy work-box or book-shelf; the neglected garden plot; the untended pet rabbit or bird; the drawing begun, and flung aside as soon as the outline was sketched or the principal figures filled in; the book of botany or astronomy half read, and then

thrown by, have often been prognostications of barren, wasted lives; of abilities frittered away on a hundred pursuits, all taken up with eagerness, and all soon abandoned with indifference.

An illustrious example of such training has recently been brought before the public mind. In an account of the late Prince Consort's farms by Mr. Morton, there is a passage worthy of being carefully studied by all parents who wish to see their children grow up in habits of industry and order. At Osborne, it appears, each of the royal children had a piece of ground for a garden, and for the cultivation of these gardens they were solely responsible. Each garden was divided into separate plots for the cultivation of flowers, and various kinds of fruit and vegetables; "and close by, in the Swiss Cottage, is a kitchen, where the vegetables which have been grown by every little gardener may be washed and cooked—where, indeed, the apparatus exists for juvenile entertainments given by those who have thus themselves carried out the whole process, from the planting of the seed or root, up to the preparation of its produce as food. It is extremely interesting to see—in the orderly arrangement of the tools, each one bearing its owner's name; in the well-tilled plots; even in the arrangements for practice and instruction in the kitchen, as well as in the admirable collections illustrative of various branches of natural history in the museum up-stairs — proofs of that regard for *the systematic, the useful, and the practical,* which the Prince Consort was known to possess. And still more interesting is it to learn that not only are the immediate ends contemplated in these things fully

attained, but that the family bond is strengthened here, as in humbler instances, by every homely family enjoyment shared in common. The Crown Princess of Prussia still retains her little garden, and produce from it is sent each summer from Osborne to Berlin." May we add the hope that the training of which this was an illustration, and which there is reason to believe extended to higher things also, may be successful in the case of all the royal children to the extent of the nation's best desires, and to the full extent of the highest hopes which her Majesty and the late beloved Prince have had in their view in the education of the royal family!

Habits of *self-reliance, forethought, and economy,* come next in order of importance. If the child is the "father of the man," the training of the child should have regard to the man's probable future career. And in no station of life are these habits out of place. They are necessary to the full development of the Christian character. Children need to be taught to think and act for themselves; and it is better that they should learn the lesson under parental supervision, where their errors can be corrected and right principles be inculcated, than that they should be exposed to the more serious errors of riper years, because unprepared to detect and avoid them. A simple illustration will make the meaning clear. Suppose, for example, a child is for the first time intrusted with pocket money, no matter whether it be a penny, a shilling, or a sovereign. Encourage him to manage his little fund himself. This will teach him self-reliance. Lead him to think of probable future wants, and to lay by for objects of

necessity and works of benevolence. This will teach him to exercise forethought and economy. A book, a watch, a toy, or a gift towards some benevolent object thus obtained, will not only be a hundred times more valuable to the child, but he will thus learn a most useful lesson for all his after life.

Good mental habits should be cultivated by a *wise supervision of a child's reading* when out of school. Most children will read of their own accord if they can get hold of attractive books, and will fly from the comparative drudgery of the school to the interesting volume of travels, tales, or adventures, which stimulates the imagination and requires no effort. This tendency must be turned to good account, and prevented from becoming a source of evil. Travels and adventures, if well selected and well read, are of course useful; and the same may be said of some tales. But never, perhaps, was care in the selection of books, especially of those comprised under the general term of "light literature," more necessary than in the present day. The flippant tone of some, the disgusting slang of others, the exaggerated colouring of another class, are, to the tender and impressible mind of the child, like attractive poison. The imagination, over stimulated, becomes jaded, and demands more extravagant incidents, profounder mysteries, and darker horrors. And it is needless to say that where this is the case, the inclination, and often not only the inclination, but, for a time, the capacity, for sound, good reading is lost. What is more sad than to find young people blind to the beauties of our sterling English literature—indeed, utterly ignorant of it—while reading with morbid avidity second and third rate works of exciting fiction?

This must be the parent's care. "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes," is a resolve which ought to apply especially to books.[1] Many a man has had through life to mourn the day when, in the impressible time of his youth, he met with a bad book. The mind becomes enfeebled, the moral tone lowered, and the life corrupted, by access to vicious literature in early life.

Let it not be supposed that in minutely pointing out these habits as necessary to the right formation of character, and as important to the child's well-being, the higher aspects of life have been lost sight of. These habits are no less necessary to a consistent Christian character than to a reputable and successful earthly career, and nowhere will they be so perfectly developed as where there is a basis of Christian faith. No man can "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,"[2] unless he be truthful, industrious, persevering, self-reliant,—unless all his faculties be devoted to wise and holy uses. While our highest efforts must, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit of God, be given to teach our children in the way of life, to point them to Christ as the only Saviour, and to lead them, so far as our hands can guide them, to him, we must not forget for them the apostolic injunction, "Add to your faith virtue."[3] And it is only by wise and watchful discipline we can do this for ourselves or for them.

[1] It is said on good authority that the late honoured and lamented Prince Consort not only superintended the general education of his children, but carefully selected, and himself read, the books which they were permitted to read. Such an illustrious example is in this respect, as well as in that already referred to, worthy of all imitation.

[2] Tit. ii. 10. [3] 2 Pet. i. 5.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER—SOCIAL HABITS.

THIS chapter will be devoted to a consideration of those habits which more directly affect our social relationships. And of these the first in order and importance is the habit of *obedience to authority*, and especially to the authority of the parent. This is a habit easily formed, if the education begin sufficiently early, but which is rarely acquired if that opportunity be lost. No child should ever be permitted, from the earliest period of apprehension, to treat lightly the bidding of its father or mother. It may be deemed superfluous to mention a truth so obvious as this. Unhappily, too many parents do allow their children so to slight their authority in early life, and then wonder (how can they wonder!) that it is so difficult to enforce obedience afterwards. "My rule," said the mother of Sir T. F. Buxton, "is implicit obedience, unconditional submission." The early enforcement of this rule will have a most beneficial effect upon a child's character, and save the parent many an hour of subsequent anxiety.

"When the will of a child is subdued," writes Mrs. Wesley, "and it is brought to revere and stand in awe of its parents, then a great many childish follies and inadvertencies may be passed by. Some should

be overlooked, and others mildly reproved; but no *wilful* transgression ought ever to be forgiven children without chastisement, less or more, as the nature and circumstances of the offence may require. I insist upon conquering the *will* of children betimes, because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education, without which both precept and example will be ineffectual. But when this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason and piety of its parents, till its own understanding comes to maturity, and the principles of religion have taken root in the mind."

The methods by which obedience is secured must, of course, be left for individual judgment. Suffice it to say, that kindness will generally be even more effectual than severity. An instance will serve to illustrate this. A lad, just emerging from boyhood, and beginning to think—with the folly common to boys of that age—that it was manly to act as if independent of any control, had by his conduct greatly grieved his pious father and mother. One day, during their absence from home, he behaved with a degree of licence which, on their return, they felt they could not overlook. They accordingly sent for him to remonstrate with him upon his conduct. The father, as he spoke, held in his hand a beautiful pocket Bible. "This," he said, "I bought to-day for you; but how can I give it to you after such conduct as you have been guilty of? Yet," he continued, in a serious and sad tone, "I will give it you in the hope that you will from this time adopt a wiser course." The tenderness and sorrow of the father touched the son's heart, and the offence was never repeated.

In Dr. Morison's life there is a very instructive instance of wise and successful discipline, resulting in the securing of this early obedience. Speaking of his son Joseph, his biographer says,—"From his natural firmness of character, he was in no small danger, at times, of yielding to a feeling of obstinacy and filial disobedience. As early as four years of age, a striking instance of this kind occurred, which was overruled for good. He had acted with some degree of rudeness to his mother, and all that was required by his father was that he should ask her forgiveness. This he peremptorily refused to do. He was taken to another apartment by his father, reasoned with, and punished; after which he was still required to entreat forgiveness of her whom he had grieved. But again he refused, and suffered a second chastisement. Still his spirit was not subdued; he would not comply with the reasonable demand made upon him. With an anguish never to be forgotten, the father retired with him a third time, and accompanied the use of the rod with fervent prayer that the youthful offender's heart might be touched with penitence. This last effort was effectual; the offence was confessed and forgiven; filial affections gushed forth in all their tenderness, and from that hour to the moment of his departure out of this world, he never again entered into direct litigation with parental authority."[1]

"The first commandment with promise"[2] is one which, both for their children's sakes and their own, it is the duty of parents rigidly to enforce. Disobedience, want of proper respect, contempt for their

[1] "Life of Dr. Morison." [2] Ephes. vi. 2.

opinion, deficient courtesy in speaking to or of them, are violations of this commandment. On the other hand, it is no less the duty of parents so to act as to secure the respect of their children. A well-trained child ought never to feel under a temptation to treat them with scant courtesy. Our modern habits are somewhat at fault here on both sides. Parents fail to secure, children fail to render, the honour due. The wrangling, disputative tone in which some parents talk to their children, and which children, so talked to, early learn to adopt towards their parents, is a sad proof of this. The contempt for a parent's opinion indulged in by too many young people, and which they scarcely attempt to conceal, indicates the same defect in others. It would not be desirable, perhaps, to restore the formal courtesy of an earlier period, when a son addressed his father as "honoured sir," and even used the word "sir" in familiar conversation; but even that is better than the modern "governor," which is both irreverent and ungentlemanly.[1] The danger is, lest the respect due to parents should depart with the form of it. It is to be feared that where the deferential tone is lost, the reverence is lost too.

Of the value and beauty of this habit of honour and obedience to parents, one or two important testimonies may be cited. Among the "miscellaneous observations" of John Foster, written during his residence in Frome, is one to the following effect:—

"A long, admonitory, and cogent conversation with

[1] It has been shrewdly remarked, that the obnoxious epithet "governor" is only used in cases where the parent does not govern.

Mr. and Mrs. —— about education. Insisted on the indispensable law of habitual, prompt, and absolute obedience of young children. In observing on the *mode* of obtaining this obedience, represented strongly the wretchedness of the plan which does not maintain authority as a necessary and habitual thing—in so uniform a manner that the child scarcely ever *thinks* of resistance, any more than of thrusting its hand into the fire,—but by a succession of violent efforts, each of which is of the nature of a battle, and a trial of strength and of rights with the child, in which the success (when success even of any kind is gained) is just a bare effect of physical force. Strongly represented that acts of authority and correction should be done *without bustle*, in a short, calm, decisive manner." [1]

In the Life of Spencer Thornton, Vicar of Wendover, a most pious and devoted minister of the gospel, occurs the following testimony to the value of this habit of obedience:—

"It appears that until he went to school he thought little upon the subject of religion, and has been heard to say in reference to that period, that when his sister, a pious child, asked him to read a hymn, or a text of Scripture, he would refuse, because he 'disliked all that sort of thing.' But *the simple habit of obedience to his parents*, in which he had been trained, was an abiding principle, and attended with the most important results; for when he was placed at school, he was not deterred by the ridicule of the boys who slept in the same room with him, from reading every

[1] "Life and Correspondence."

morning and night his prayers, in a little book called 'Daily Bread,' given him by his mother."[1]

We can hardly fail to trace to this habit of obedience,—which thus enabled him as a boy, and not at that time decidedly religious, to brave ridicule for persisting in what he had been taught to do at home,—an important influence upon the formation of his character and on his future career.

Habits of *kindness and consideration for others* must be made prominent objects in the formation of character. And the family association furnishes abundant opportunities for the cultivation of such habits. Children should early be taught never to give unnecessary trouble to servants, or to their parents. They should also be trained to think how they may assist, or save them trouble. The principle of the Christian life, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," must early be brought into play. What can be more disastrous, not only to usefulness, but to happiness in after life, than selfish, thoughtless habits? What can I do to help? should be early made a familiar thought. Children thus trained are truly treasures, wherever their lot is cast. A young person accustomed to mak this a habit of life, was visiting at a house where much of the domestic work fell upon the mother of the family, who was a person of feeble health. Without waiting to be asked, and with genuine though unobtrusive kindness, she contrived to make herself familiar with the routine of household duties, and often anticipated the labours of the day

[1] Life, by Rev. W. Fremantle.

by doing much of the work before her friend's health permitted her to rise. This is but a simple instance of how persons possessed of such habits may make themselves everywhere useful. It will make all the difference to the peace and comfort of many a household, whether the children are thus trained in the habit of thinking for others, or whether they have been allowed to grow up in listless or selfish disregard of any but themselves.

With regard to many of these qualities, more may be done by indirect influence than by direct injunction. The wise parent will watch for opportunities of giving the needed lesson, of encouraging the growth of the desired habit. The general tone of life in the household will be a great help or hindrance here. The best efforts to cultivate good habits will be comparatively in vain, if children do not see in those around them the qualities which it is desirable they should themselves possess.

Such opportunities may be found in a child's amusements as well as in its more serious pursuits. In early life the greater part of a child's time must be spent in play. And as this is the case, the desirableness of rendering that time subservient to its moral training must not be overlooked. A habit of readily giving up to others, and especially to younger brothers and sisters; good temper and self-restraint under minor provocations; a cheerful, helpful, kindly, unselfish disposition, may thus be cultivated; and modes of thinking and feeling, of speaking and acting in social intercourse will be insensibly adopted, which will be of incalculable value in after-life.

It will help much in the formation of character if

children are taught to feel sympathy with their parents in their pursuits, particularly in such as lie out of the regular round of secular life. Such, for example, as those which are scientific or literary in their character, and, more important still, those which are of a directly benevolent or religious nature. Legh Richmond, as we have seen in a former chapter, sought to identify himself with the occupations and studies of his children. It is no less important that children should be encouraged to identify themselves as far as possible with those of their parents. The wise father and mother will endeavour to give their children, as they grow up, an interest in any book they may be reading, and will take pains to enable them to understand and appreciate it. So with regard to scientific studies, in which children may very early be taught to take an interest. Sir T. F. Buxton sought to do this, and with very great success, as to the benevolent objects which engaged so much of his attention. His children were encouraged to converse freely with him about them, and he gladly accepted their assistance in his work, however trifling and unimportant that assistance might be. He thus trained them to sympathy with the objects themselves, and at the same time encouraged them in habits of thoughtfulness, industry, and self-denial for the good of others. A life-long influence for good has often been exerted, sometimes the direction of the after-life has been decided, by early association with some benevolent pursuit, or with some religious institution, in which the child has been led to share an interest with his parents.

In seeking the end contemplated in this and the

preceding chapter, the question of *discipline* is one which will demand the serious attention of the parent. Without this, the moral training cannot be efficiently carried on. One thing must be understood—that discipline is not necessarily punishment, and that punishment is not always wise discipline. "Of all the blessings that may befall us in childhood," writes Dr. Vaughan, "there cannot be a greater than that of a home where there is discipline, but a discipline without fear. . . . The family is the State in little. The effects of a reign of terror are the same in both. Deceit and falsehood seem to become legitimate weapons when left as the only means wherewith the weak can hope to oppose themselves successfully to the lawlessness of the strong."[1]

A wise liberty must be allowed to children, in combination with the requirement of perfect submission and the exercise of self-restraint. Children are being trained to think and act for themselves in after-life; and in order to this, the golden mean must be found between a rule so strict as to destroy all independent action, and unchecked licence. Home-life ought not to be a state of slavery, but of freedom,—freedom regulated by wise laws, which children must early be taught that it is their duty, their interest, and their happiness to obey. No life is so wretched to a child as that in which its liberty is unrestrained; and the result will be as disastrous as the immediate effect is unhappy. A watchful but not a meddlesome supervision must be exercised over the whole life. To be constantly finding fault, and magnifying petty errors into great sins, will

[1] Memoir of his Son.

be productive of harm to the child's temper, and will often lead him to think lightly of serious faults. Yet, on the other hand, the common phrase, *a spoiled child*, significantly shows the danger of too much letting alone. A child thus treated is *spoiled* indeed.

The wise and pious parent will, for this arduous task, seek "the wisdom which cometh from above." The word of God teaches, with Divine authority, the true philosophy on this point.[1] Strict obedience must be enforced, and faults corrected, even by severe chastisement. On the other hand, we must not provoke our children to anger, "lest they be discouraged."[2] "Mr. Richmond's method of discipline,"[3] writes Mr. Bickersteth, "was peculiar to himself, partly the effect of his own unbounded tenderness and affection, but, in a great measure, of his deep and extraordinary piety. He could never be accused of a weak connivance at evil, for here he was resolute, firm, and inflexible; yet he was never known to employ corporal chastisement. He was alive to all that was wrong in principle or conduct, and he never ceased to remonstrate or to employ means to reduce his child to obedience, and awaken in him a sense of error. But the chief way in which he marked his displeasure was by those signs of extreme distress which penetrated the heart of the delinquent, and softened rebellion into regret. Seeking for himself help and guidance from above, he showed his determination to punish the offender by excluding him for a time from the society of the family, 'as one unworthy to share in their privileges and affections.'" The result of this mode of treatment was,

[1] Prov. xxix. 15, 17; xix. 18. [2] Col. iii. 21.
[3] "Domestic Portraiture."

in his case, very happy. "No one of his children could long endure this exclusion, or bear, with sullen indifference, a countenance which silently expressed the deepest anguish. Perhaps there never was a family in which the reign of love suffered less interruption."

Children may very early be taught to exercise self-discipline, and thus materially assist the labours of the parent. A remarkable instance of this is given in the "Memoir of Francis Lewis Mackenzie," who at a very early age was taught to exercise self-control, and even take himself to task when he had been guilty of a fault. "I certainly never saw a child," said his mother, in a letter written at the time to an absent daughter, and when he was scarcely more than two years old, "with such a decided will of his own; so much ardour, energy, and intentness of purpose, who at that early age was so very easily managed and reasoned with. When he takes any little tantrum of impatience or self-will, if he is contended with, he gets worse; but the way I now always adopt is to take him aside for a moment, and in a kind, calm, but very firm manner, whisper in his ear, 'Was it right and good of Frank to do so-and-so?' He listens attentively to me, reflects for a minute, and then, with a solemnity and firmness that would make you laugh, pronounces '*No.*' Having once condemned himself, he immediately, with the greatest sweetness and cheerfulness, yields the point entirely, whatever it may have been."

Consciences thus awakened, and judgments thus early brought into action, will to a great extent prevent the necessity of severe discipline at a later period. That necessity too often tells of early neglect, of habits of self-will allowed to grow unchecked in the early

period of self-consciousness. In the formation of character, as well as in religious instruction, we cannot begin too soon. Happy those parents who, by a consistent and holy regard for the highest welfare of their children, not only *occasionally* instruct or correct them, but *train them up* in habits of virtue and godliness. Their labour "shall not be in vain in the Lord."

CHAPTER VIII.

CHILD-PIETY.

THE possibility of early and even of infant piety has always been acknowledged, but, perhaps, its true nature has not always been well understood. The idea of piety in children has been too often associated with some diseased development of the faculties. The child has been unnaturally precocious, the mental powers have been too early developed, the moral nature has been morbidly sensitive, and the prematurely wise and pious infant has been supposed to be thereby marked out for an early death.

In many of the cases of very early piety which we have on record, this has undoubtedly been the case. The piety itself has been precocious, and, but that we can hardly doubt the sincerity of a child of three or four years old, it would seem artificial. It has been more like the adoption of a mature form of piety by a mind far older than its years, and tinged with the sadness of premature decay, than the healthy outgrowth of an infant mind under the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, infantile in all its apprehensions, emotions, and sympathies.

It is an error to suppose that piety in children, and especially in very young children, should assume precisely the same form as the piety of grown-up people. Children do not cease to be children because their hearts are renewed by Divine grace. The profound philosopher and the illiterate peasant may both

rely, simply as sinners, on Christ alone for salvation, but they will have necessarily very different apprehensions of theological systems. The conception of some aspects of Divine truth, which would be familiar to the former, might be, from deficiency of culture, unappreciable by the latter. Yet the truth may be exercising its sanctifying power upon both. And so it is with children. They may be like Timothy, of whom it was said, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures;" or like Samuel, who as a child received the prophetic calling; yet it would be absurd to expect from them such apprehensions of truth, or such a depth of experience, as we look for from matured Christians. In the words of St. Paul, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

We ought, then, to look for *childish* piety in children. The simplest forms of truth will alone be capable of being understood by them. Their apprehension of the facts of the Bible will be as childish as their apprehension of the facts of history will be. Much of Christian, at least of theological Christian literature must be like a sealed book to them. They can know nothing of the fiercer conflicts of the Christian warfare, in its struggle with the subtle and mighty temptations of riper years and worldly associations. They will be unable to appreciate, unable, happily, to feel, the doubts which sometimes shake, though they cannot destroy, the faith of strong and mature Christians. Yet they may have a true Christian experience, a real apprehension of their state as sinners and of the all-sufficiency of Christ as a Saviour; a true trust in

him and love to him, a recognition of God as their Father, of the Holy Spirit as their Helper and Teacher, of the word of God as their guide. And they may give evidence in their conduct that the grace they have received has as real an influence upon them in their childhood, as it has upon the graver life of older Christians.

The piety which, by God's blessing, we must seek to cultivate in children must be *child-piety;* not necessarily resembling in all things the outward manifestations of maturer religion, but corresponding to the child's knowledge and experience. We desire for them a piety which shall teach them to look to God for help in their little difficulties, temptations, and sorrows; which shall associate him with their childish pursuits and enjoyments; which shall enable them to look for the forgiveness of their childish sins to the blood of Jesus; which shall make reverently familiar to them the thought of a renewing and sanctifying Spirit; which shall cultivate in them a patient, loving, unselfish disposition; which shall guard them against the outbursts of childish passion; which shall teach them to do all things as in God's sight, and to please him; which shall encourage them to pray to him; which shall bring their childish affections and sympathies into constant and close communion with Him who loved little children, and said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."[1]

Experience proves that this is possible where pious training and teaching, and holy example, are combined with dependence on the gracious aid of the Holy

[1] Matt. xix. 14.

Spirit, and earnest prayer for his Divine teaching. Children may thus be *brought up* "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,"[1] and may pass from step to step and from stage to stage of Christian experience, till they become matured Christians, their piety growing with their growth and strengthening with their strength, even as our Lord Jesus, the Divine pattern of our lives, "grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."[2]

It is not forgotten that all are born in sin; that all, whether the children of pious parents or of the ungodly, are partakers of a corrupt nature. Nor must we for a moment lose sight of the fact, that all alike need the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit. Forgetting or slighting these truths, we lose some of the most powerful incentives to prayer, and greatest motives to effort, which we possess. All our plans and purposes must be devised and carried out in accordance with these momentous facts. We begin our work, not upon a pure and virgin soil, but upon one which already contains the germs of noxious and poisonous growths. And we are of ourselves powerless to eradicate the seeds of evil. A mightier, a Divine influence is needed to make this soil bring forth the fruits of righteousness. Here is the root of our responsibility and our encouragement. The work is arduous, the results of success or failure are awful in their stupendous magnitude; but Divine help is promised; and the whole tenor of the word of God encourages us to believe that to faithful effort, and in answer to earnest prayer, the renewing grace will not be withheld.[3]

[1] Ephes. vi. 4. [2] Luke ii. 52. [3] See Chapter VI.

Sometimes this renewing grace may be imparted at so early a period that it is impossible to trace its earliest manifestations, so blended are they with the better natural aspects of early childhood. Children may, by the blessing of God on a wise and pious training, be so early brought to Christ, that their own memory in after years fails to bear record of the time when they passed from death unto life. Numerous and well-authenticated instances are on record of those whose subsequent lives have borne witness to the reality of the change which they then experienced; or, at least, to the process of religious impression and conviction which then commenced. Indeed, the cases are probably rare in which children religiously brought up pass through the period of childhood without having such impressions produced on their minds, though they may often be like the "morning cloud, and the early dew which goeth away."[1]

Matthew Henry was remarkable for his early interest in the preaching of God's word, and would often, after hearing it, retire to weep and pray. When quite a child, after hearing his father preach from the parable of the grain of mustard seed, he walked with him after the service in order to converse with him on the truth he had heard, and on his return he told one of his sisters that "he hoped he had now received that blessed grain of true grace in his soul, and though it was very small at present, yet that it would come to something in time." Further writes his biographer,—"It appears by these papers" (papers written by the boy himself when only thirteen years old), "that when he was but

[1] Hos. vi. 4.

eleven years old he was led into the knowledge of himself, and of the state of his own soul towards God; and upon strict examination, by the rule of God's word, was enabled to draw the comfortable conclusion that he was converted and pardoned; . . and yet, suspecting the deceitfulness of his own heart, he opened it freely and faithfully to his excellent father, desiring his help in this great concern of his soul: and what greater joy could such a father have, than to hear his son, his only son, at the age of ten or eleven years, thus inquiring after God, asking the way toward heaven with his face thitherward!"[1] How truly his after-life bore witness to the reality of this conversion we need not relate.

The life of Wilberforce Richmond, well known through Mr. Bickersteth's excellent volume, "Domestic Portraiture," is peculiarly deserving of attention, as illustrating the gradual deepening of religious impressions, and the growth of a true religious experience in childhood. Always of an affectionate, amiable disposition; strictly honourable in all his conduct; early developing a taste for the beautiful in art and in nature; of superior mental capacity and retentive memory; even as a child an intelligent and interesting companion, and outwardly all his parents could wish, they were yet anxious about one thing—had their child given himself to God?

Mr. Richmond, as has been already related, was in the habit of corresponding with his children; endeavouring by this means to impress religious truth upon their minds, and lead them to personal deci-

[1] Life, by Rev. W. Tong.

sion. These communications were the means of eliciting the glad tidings that his son had been seeking Christ, and had been brought to trust in him. It appeared, from his own account, that convictions of sin had come and gone from a very early age, but without leaving any permanent impression on his mind. Then came the death of an infant brother, awakening deeper conviction, and followed by earnest prayer for pardon and for a renewed heart. A period of self-righteous satisfaction followed, thus described by himself:—"I thought I was proof against temptation, and had the presumption to suppose myself fit for the ministry." Then came haunting doubts which destroyed all peace, so that he "could not, dared not pray." But God was merciful to him. He did pray; he was Divinely directed to the means of relief, and became thenceforth a simple-minded, teachable, pious youth.

As he had shown no extraordinary precocity, it cannot be supposed that there was anything morbid or artificial in this experience. It was that of an intelligent, educated child, of one who was but still a child in modes of thinking and feeling. Who can doubt that the hand of God was here? that all along, working with and by means of his early religious training, His grace had been drawing the child's heart nearer and nearer to himself?

During the remainder of his life, and through his last illness, he gave abundant proof that he had not received the grace of God in vain. "As Wilberforce grew up," writes his sister, "he was considered by the whole family as the one marked out to fill his father's place in the church. He became an object of interest

to all; and to none was he more endeared than to his loving parent, who clung to him with deeper affection each succeeding year." This refers to a time previous to his fatal illness, and when, as the words imply, there seemed every prospect of life and usefulness.

These hopes, however, were destined to be disappointed. In his seventeenth year, he caught a violent cold, which, a few months later, resulted in the rupture of a bloodvessel. From this attack he never thoroughly recovered; and it was during the illness which followed, and which was both lingering and painful, that his piety reached its full strength. For a time his Christian hope seems to have been overclouded. He thought he had been deceiving himself with false hopes. Yet amidst these conflicts he seemed to see, as he expressed it in a letter to his mother, "a light glimmering through the darkness.' He adds, "Oh, mamma! if you love your son, join your prayers to his, that this life, this ray of hope, may increase, and that he may have a sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection to eternal life."

During the following year he became rapidly worse; but his sorrowing father could write to his mother —"Take comfort from the state of his mind. It is truly interesting. All its natural superiority mingles with its spiritual characteristics. When not oppressed by debility and pain, his countenance beams with sweet smiles of composure and love."

In conversation with him, Mr. Richmond expressed the fear that he had not sufficiently urged him to freedom of intercourse on religious subjects. "Indeed, papa," he said, "the fault was not yours. I have felt a backwardness, particularly of late, to disclose what

was passing in my mind. But now I feel quite at liberty to talk of myself; and I first tell you that I think I see God's design in keeping me thus shut up from you. It was his gracious purpose to teach me, in the privacy and solitude of inward meditation, my state as a sinner, and the nature of salvation by a Saviour; here I learnt the deep things of God, and now I would come forth and tell you what Christ has done for my soul."

"I found," says Mr. Richmond, "his mind perfectly clear as to the great principle of his acceptance with God, solely and unequivocally through the death and righteousness of Christ. 'It is,'" said he, "'as a guilty sinner before God that I throw myself on his mercy. . . . I have no merit, I can have none. *I thank God I have long known this.*'"

Shortly before his death he said to his sister, "My dear, my very dear F——, I hope we shall meet in heaven. I could not talk to you in this calm manner, if I did not believe we should meet again. But you have much to learn—much to do, before you can get there. There is but one road, and without an entire dedication of the heart to God, you cannot walk in it." He then spoke of the danger to which those were exposed who, having received a religious education, had "a form of godliness" while the heart was unchanged, and of the possibility of being deluded with a merely "sentimental religion," and added, "My dear sister, be a *real* disciple—be in earnest. You will want *heart* religion when you come to die; the poetry of religion will not do then."

During his illness he had frequently suffered extreme agony, and as he lay dying, Mr. Richmond, fearing a

return of this, went into his study, in order, as it was afterwards ascertained, to pray "that if it were God's will his child might have quiet and ease in his last moments." As he left him, "serene and beautiful in his repose," he blessed him, and said, "So he giveth his beloved sleep." Wilberforce opened his eyes, and replied, "Yes, dear papa, and the rest which Christ gives is sweet." He did not speak again. His father returned in time to receive his last breath; and the first words which broke the silence of death were,— "My child is a saint in glory."

It is impossible to read with unprejudiced judgment the simple annals of such a life without being convinced of the possibility of early piety of a very high order. But we are not to suppose that such piety is only found in those who are destined to die young. It is a vulgar and a most hurtful superstition which connects early piety with early death. Many have given themselves to God in childhood who have been spared for a long career of usefulness. The early death only develops more rapidly the Christian character, and makes manifest to all beholders that which is possible to every child. As the early coming night brings out the stars the sooner, so the early going down of life's day does but sooner reveal the piety which would have shone forth more usefully, though perhaps less conspicuously, had life been spared.

In the case of Francis Lewis Mackenzie, to which allusion has already been made, the evidence of a change of heart was manifested much earlier, and in a more childish way; and his subsequent life bore full testimony to the reality of his piety. His moral sense was cultivated by a wise and tender mother from the

very dawn of reason, and almost from infancy he responded to appeals made to it. When not more than three years old he would take himself to task, and gravely pass judgment on himself for his childish delinquencies. But what is more remarkable, as evidence of the work of grace at a very early age, his biographer says, "There does not appear to have been any period in which this child, when old enough to give expression to thought, was unable to realize and to rejoice in the consciousness of his dependence upon God."

Very early it was his habit to pray; not simply repeating forms of prayer, but putting his desires into expressions of his own, the very childishness of which proclaims their genuineness. Sometimes he mentioned these desires to his mother, that she might put them into words for him; but more frequently he gave expression to them in his own simple language. On one occasion, having been present during a conversation on the evangelization of the world between some ministers, one of whom was going out as a missionary, he said in his evening prayer,—"O Lord, they are wanting to tell the people about Jesus. Do thou make a great many people go to hear them, that they may know about Jesus and be good." On another occasion, having been reproved for a fault which at first he attempted to justify, but which he afterwards with sorrow acknowledged, he thus prayed —"O my God, forgive me for having been so wicked, and for having made Satan so glad this day; for oh! how Satan rejoices when he makes one of thy children do wrong!"

It is the triumph of Christian training when the

mind becomes thus early imbued with Divine truth, and the thoughts, retaining all their childish simplicity, take their colouring from it. He maintained during the whole course of his life, brief as it was, "a steady onward progress, and did not turn from it to the right hand or to the left." It is this fact that gives to these records of his childhood so deep an interest. He was early taught to look to Jesus as his Saviour, and as he grew in years, he grew in knowledge of him. His boyhood fulfilled the promise of his childhood. "The love of Christ was still his guiding principle; and this principle, implanted by the power of the Holy Ghost, received day by day fresh vigour from his habitual study of the Scriptures." Subsequently, both at Glasgow and Cambridge, his student life justified the hopes which had been raised by his infancy and boyhood. He seemed indeed to be sanctified from his birth. At least, the Divine operations of the gracious Spirit were apparently simultaneous with the awakening of consciousness.

The period from youth to manhood is one in which Christian principle is often severely tested, and the apparent piety of childhood is not unfrequently exchanged for religious indifference, or for some of the grosser forms of worldliness. But it was not so with him. "He kept the even tenor of his way," and while diligently pursuing his studies, as one so thoroughly under the influence of Christian principle would, he carefully sought to grow in grace by prayer, and the study of the word of God.

His private character, as it was known to his intimate friends at college, and his readiness to engage in all kinds of Christian work, afford the surest testimony

to the reality of the piety so early begun. One of his friends writes, "Wherever there was a hope of bringing souls to Christ, he was ready to take part in the labour of love." Another says, "Tracks of his path of life lie thickly here. In his sabbath infant school, babies' tears tell of his tenderness; in the class he formerly taught, older children, with swimming eyes and trembling lips, say, 'He was so kind to us; and he loved best to speak to us of the Lord Jesus.'" Those who were most intimate with him bore the strongest testimony to the reality and beauty of his piety. One tells of his "calm simplicity and sober truthfulness, his unshaken faith in the merits of his Redeemer, his holy and zealous love for his name, his full reliance on the merciful wisdom and never failing love and goodness of his heavenly Father, the unobtrusive piety which pervaded his whole conduct and conversation, and formed the mainspring of his being, —visible principally in its effects." Another says, "It was perfectly evident that his life was governed by deep Christian principles, from his ordinary habits and demeanour, quite as much as from occasional strictly religious conversations. . . . It was impossible not to feel at once that you were talking to a pure-minded, simple, unselfish Christian, as well as a truly courteous gentleman. The remembrance of his worth and friendship will always be one of the brightest spots in my undergraduate life at Cambridge."

Here surely is ample proof that early piety may be real, though it be childlike in its first manifestations, and that it may unfold itself, by the grace of God, in the fruits of mature and intelligent Christian life. He died as he had lived, relying on Christ for salva-

tion, rejoicing in his perfect atonement. Again and again he asked to have repeated to him the now well-known hymn, beginning,—

> "Just as I am, without one plea,
> But that thy blood was shed for me,
> And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
> O Lamb of God, I come."

If a hope, so full of joy to a parent's heart, may be indulged, as that children, even from their tenderest years, may become the subjects of renewing grace, it surely argues a defect in parental teaching and training when aught less than true conversion to God is made the aim. No one really doubts the possibility of early conversion, yet the question at once suggests itself, Do parents act as if they believed this, and set it before themselves as their aim and hope respecting their children? Early piety is thought of as something exceptional. It is not regarded as a thing to be looked for; for which we should teach, and guide, and pray, and hope. The too frequent thought is, "I hope they will some day be converted," rather than the earnest desire, accompanied by wise and faithful effort, that God would convert them now; and the precious seed-time is thus too often lost.

We do indeed look for the full results of our training in after life, but assuredly we may, with such instances as these before us, look for present results, too. We educate our children with regard to their present as well as to their future conduct and character. We are not content to see them disobedient, ill-mannered, and ignorant now, in the hope that they may become polite and accomplished some day. We

see at once the fallacy of such an expectation. But this argument applies with a thousand-fold more force to thespiritual life. And why should not the highest aim be sought first? Is the heart less capable of receiving religious truth in childhood than in riper years? The experience of all, who have had to do with children, shows that the youthful mind is more open to religious truth than that of the adult. Do they need renewing grace less than those of maturer years, so that it is desirable they should wait till their sinful habits have been formed before they become the subjects of true renewal? Surely such a thought is too monstrous to be entertained for a moment. The renewal is needed, and the power to renew must be Divine, even in childhood. And it is in childhood that the effects of that renewal are often most fully seen.

"Grace is a plant, where'er it grows,
Of pure and heavenly root;
But fairest in the youngest shows,
And yields the sweetest fruit."

"Yes," said a father, in answer to the inquiry of his visitor respecting an interesting child who had left the room—"yes, I believe she is a child of God." May all Christian parents have the like joy in their children, not only as they grow up to maturity, but in the freshness and beauty of their childhood's life!

The imperfections and follies of children are no argument against the possibility of their piety, any more than the imperfections of older Christians are an argument against the reality of their faith. Who is there that has not had reason to deplore defects of character and failures in duty, quite as serious in the mature Christian as those which have to be corrected

in children? They need the teaching of experience as well as ourselves. They have to struggle with evil, wayward tendencies, as we have. They are apt to be led astray by passion or inclination, just as men and women are. And they cannot be expected to possess the maturity of judgment, or the power of self-government, which we have a right to look for in grown-up people. We must not forget, in judging of their Christian character, that they are children still.

Of course, if a child, as it grows older, betrays a greater tendency to evil, resists it with less determination or not at all, and shows an increasing spirit of disobedience and wilfulness, we must, whatever our hopes may have been, abandon those hopes, and seek anew the Divine grace on its behalf. But if, on the contrary, the opening character of a child, religiously nurtured, develops itself in obedience, and gentleness, and goodness; if the awakening mind fastens upon Divine things, and finds delight in them; if, though in a childlike manner, there is a conflict maintained with evil passions, and an evident love for holy things, may we not hope, ought we not to hope, that there the grace of God has commenced that new and Divine life, which shall be perfected in His presence in fulness of joy?

The exuberant playfulness of children, the superabundant life and energy which they sometimes display, belong to their very nature as children. And it is oftener a proof of physical weakness than of piety, when boisterous vigour is exchanged for quiet brooding, and they show a desire to shun the merry sports of their companions. It does not militate against a

child's piety that he is robust, healthy, and fond of play, and that he enters into it with all the freedom and buoyancy of childhood. We do not want an unhealthy and precocious maturity, but a healthy child-piety. Children must be judged of as children, and the piety of children, to be genuine, must be *childish* in its character.

It is true that in many instances pious parents have been compelled sorrowfully to abandon the hopes they had cherished on behalf of their offspring in childhood. The appearance of early piety has faded away, and the "lusts of other things entering in"[1] have choked the good seed which seemed to have been implanted in their hearts. The restraints of home have been broken through, the principles taught at home have been cast off, the habits formed there abandoned. To all appearance, a state of reckless impiety has followed; or, in other cases, a cold and careless indifference to vital religion. Yet even here we ought not to despair. The disappointment is often only for a time. Under that apparent indifference there frequently exists a restless anxiety of heart, which will not be allayed till it finds rest in Christ. And even in the case of those who have become most abandoned, numerous instances prove that while no case is hopeless, we are justified in indulging especial hope with regard to those who have in early life been piously trained.

The Christian home can only be complete when the children are led to Jesus; when the right means are wisely and prayerfully used to develop in them

[1] Mark iv. 19.

a piety which shall make their childish lives beautiful and holy. What more lovely sight can there be on earth than a home of happy children, full of the exuberant vivacity of childhood, as yet unburdened by the world's cares, recognising Christ as their Saviour, and growing in love to him and conformity to his commands! Conscious of sin, and feeling their need of forgiveness, they have learned daily to seek it at his feet. Conscious of their need of Divine help to enable them to resist their childish temptations and fulfil their childish duties, they are daily suppliants for his grace. Their little troubles, their childish difficulties, they bring to Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." They grow daily in the recognition of him as their Saviour and Lord.

The home-life in all its aspects would be thus brightened and blessed. Parents and children would have a still stronger tie of affection, and brothers and sisters would feel their love more hallowed, if they could thus regard one another as fellow-heirs of the grace of life. Obedience would be rendered to parents, not by compulsion, but of delight, as obedience to the Divine will. Parental supervision and authority would be exercised to guide and control, rather than to correct. Mutual service, ungrudgingly rendered, would fulfil the law of Christ. O happy homes! Circles of Christian love and fellowship more beautiful than aught else this world contains! Scenes where "ministering spirits"[1] might love to linger, and in which God himself delights to dwell! Christian

[1] Heb. i. 14.

parents! let no effort, no prayer be spared, that such a home may be yours.

"I feel," wrote a little child not more than twelve years old to her mother, "that I am a great sinner in the sight of God, that I need to have my sins forgiven, and to have a new heart. Dear mamma, I have prayed for these, and I hope and trust that, through the blood of Christ, I am made clean. I have felt in my own mind happier, much happier, since I thought more of religion." That child grew up to maturity a consistent and pious follower of Christ. Why should such cases be rare? Why should children ever get from us the idea that piety is something far removed from their range of life? The child's heart is accessible to the influences of Divine grace. The child's affections may be won by Christ's love. The child's conscience may be awakened to a sense of sin. The child's prayer may ascend through the one Mediator for pardon and cleansing. The child's faith may trust,—and, oh, how simply and fully it does trust—in Christ as the only Saviour! The child's life may show, in a way suited to its childish knowledge and experience, the proof of the Divine change wrought in its heart. Christian parents! seek that such grace, such wisdom may be given you—that such Divine blessing may rest upon your efforts to bring up your children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," that the happiness of your home may be completed in the early piety of those for whom your hands toil, and your hearts pray.

CHAPTER IX.

FAMILY WORSHIP.

It seems probable that the oldest form of worship was family worship. In patriarchal times the head of the household was the priest, and the household itself the congregation. Even heathenism recognised, after its fashion, the duty of family worship. In Rome, the *lares*, which were supposed to be the guardians of houses, and the *penates*, which were regarded as the protectors of families, were worshipped in the house, and their images and altars formed a necessary part of the domestic establishment. "The necessity and propriety of family prayer," says Mr. James, "arise out of the constitution of the family; and were it not enjoined by the word of God, either by precept or example, it would still be binding upon the conscience of every parent, by the relation in which he stands to his family, and the extent of their dependence upon God."

The Bible contains abundant evidence that family worship has been the invariable accompaniment of family religion. The examples of Abraham, who, wherever he pitched his tent, built an altar; of Joshua, whose resolution to serve God embraced his family and household; of Job, to whose family piety especial attention has already been directed,[1] are cases in point

[1] Chap. II.

But the indirect argument is no less forcible. Can we conceive it possible that the supreme claims of religion in our domestic relations can be fulfilled without a daily recognition of our allegiance to Him who "setteth the solitary in families," and who is the Giver of our family mercies? The very prayer, after the manner of which we are taught to pray, "Give *us* this day our daily bread," points out its fitness for family use. It is evidently designed to be the prayer, not only of the individual, but of the social or domestic circle to which he belongs.

"The voice of rejoicing and salvation," says the Psalmist, "is in the tabernacles of the righteous."[1] There God is daily worshipped; there his praise is heard; there his mercy is the daily theme of song. Surely, as the Christian father and mother gather their little ones around them, refreshed by the calm rest of the night, and surrounded by the new mercies of the morning, they cannot fail to remember and thank Him whose eye has watched over their home, under the shadow of whose wings they have slept in peace. And as evening gathers them together again, unbroken in numbers, and still crowned with loving-kindness and tender mercies, what more fitting close to the day can be imagined, than that they should again commend themselves and their children to His care who only maketh them to dwell in safety?

But family worship is also of great practical importance as a means of maintaining family piety. It is a witness, a practical and persistent witness, of the holy solicitude felt by the heads of the household for each of its members. Amid the duties of the day, the cares

[1] Psa. cxviii. 15.

of the family, and the worry of business, it serves as a recognition of the higher claims of religion. It proclaims the supreme importance of religion in common life. It cherishes a spirit of reverence for sacred things in the midst of daily toil. It awakens or keeps alive a sense of religious responsibility, and a conviction of religious obligation. Those who have had the opportunity of observation can scarcely have failed to notice the difference between the moral tone of those families where this duty is consistently fulfilled, and those where the day and the week begin and end with nothing to break the monotony of worldly toil and worldly care. "It calls off the mind from the deadening effect of worldly affairs. It arrests every member with a morning and evening sermon in the midst of the hurries and cares of life. It says, 'There is a God! There is a spiritual world! There is a life to come!'"[1]

An English gentleman of accomplished mind and manners, but an infidel, was visiting a pious family in America. As the evening drew on, the host, knowing the nature of his guest's religious views, politely informed him that the hour had arrived for their family worship, adding that he should be happy to have him remain, but that if he preferred it, he could retire. The gentleman intimated that it would give him pleasure to remain. He stayed and knelt with them. In a few days he left; but in the course of three or four years the providence of God again led him to that Christian home. He came now, however, the happy Christian, himself a man of prayer. That

[1] Cecil.

family worship, when he bent the knee to the Maker whom he had so long neglected, brought to his mind a crowd of recollections. It so vividly reminded him of a parent's prayers, which he had heard at home, but which he had long forgotten. His emotion was so great that the prayer itself was unheard. But the arrow of conviction struck home, and this incident was made the means of bringing him "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Here is a double witness to the importance of family worship. This evidence of piety at home in a distant land brought back to his thoughts his own early home of piety. Had there been no home memories to be awakened, the impression would not have been produced. Had he not thus met with a praying household, he might to all human appearance have remained in his infidelity to the end of his days.

But there may be a regular and elaborate observance of the form of family worship where there is no true spiritual life, and no exhibition of the graces of the Christian character, in the household. And where this is the case, it is likely to be worse than in vain. It is a sad exhibition of Christian inconsistency when the family Bible and the family prayer are the prelude to a day spent in the service of mammon, or where family bickerings, envyings, strifes, jealousies, and evil speakings, attest the mockery of God with which the day commenced. If there is a selfish, worldly atmosphere in the house; if pride and ambition and the follies of fashion rule in it; if the influence of the life all the rest of the day, and every day in the week, are exclusively on the side of worldly aggrandizement and worldly position,—how

can the morning and evening prayer be "as incense" to Him?

Family worship will only be a true witness for God and sacred things where the whole family life beats in harmony with it, and is regulated by it as the pulse is by the heart. It is "piety at home" which gives to family worship its meaning and value. The graces of the Christian character, the faithful fulfilment of Christian duty, the exhibition of a Christian spirit by the heads of the household, making the spirit of the house one of love, and peace, and purity, and giving an elevated tone to all the life, will alone give to the morning and evening devotion its proper weight and influence with the rest of the household. All the life must accord with it, if it is to exert upon them any beneficial influence, if it is to be to any, what it ought to be to all, a daily means of grace.

The duty of domestic worship, fulfilled in this spirit, is never out of place. It forms a fitting prelude to every duty contemplated, the fitting close to every duty done. And it is not too much to say that no pursuits or social enjoyments should ever be indulged in, which are incompatible with a thoughtful and reverent attention to it. The varying scenes of life give ever new proof of its value. In the joy or the sorrow of the house it is alike appropriate. The new member of the household, fresh gift of God, is welcomed in it with utterances of grateful praise. Children, so soon as they are old enough to understand that they must be quiet, take their place at the service, and hear themselves presented in humble faith to Him who gathers the lambs in his arms, and folds them in his bosom. When the time comes for

their separation from home, a father's affectionate anxiety for them speaks in the faltering tones with which he commends them to the care of a covenant keeping God. When the daughters of the house are about to enter new homes, and take upon themselves the new responsibilities of wives and mothers, the fond hope respecting their households expresses itself in the fervent prayers in which they join, it may be for the last time, on the morning of the parting day. And when sorrow casts its shadows within the happy home circle, when there is an inmate of a sick chamber, or when the silence of death has hushed all voices into undertones of sadness, even then the family altar is felt to be the fitting meeting-place of those who are left. They gather together in closer sympathy, and feel how much more the survivors must be to each other now, as they kneel side by side, and say, "Thy will be done!"

The value and beauty of family worship in the time of bereavement are illustrated by an incident in the life of the Rev. J. A. James, which has almost a touch of the sublime. It was his custom to read at family prayer on Saturday evenings the 103rd Psalm. On the Saturday of the week in which Mrs. James died, he hesitated, with the open Bible in his hand, before he began to read; but, after a moment's silence, he looked up and said, "Notwithstanding what has happened this week, I see no reason for departing from our usual custom of reading the 103rd Psalm,— 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.'"[1] What must be the effect upon a household of such a scene! What a picture

[1] Life of Rev. J. A. James.

is thus presented of holy resignation and thankfulness! The greatest sufferer recognising, as the head of the family, the hand that has smitten his home and made it desolate; and in the depth of his sorrow blessing the name of the Lord!

As to the best times for the discharge of this duty there cannot be much question. Wherever practicable, the beginning of the day, before its business commences, and the evening, when its duties are done, seem marked out as the most appropriate. In some cases either the morning or the evening prayer may be impossible; but these must be comparatively few. Occasional interruptions, too, may interfere with its regular observance; but for the most part the rule as suggested may be kept. And it may be seriously questioned whether either business or social arrangements ought to be made by Christian heads of households, which should always prevent the fulfilment of this duty.

"You will, of course," writes John Newton, in a letter to a friend on this subject, "choose those hours when you are least liable to be incommoded by the calls of business, and when the family can assemble with the most convenience; only I would observe, that it greatly preserves regularity and good order in a house to keep constantly to the same hours when it is practicable, and likewise that it is best not to defer evening prayer till late, if it can be well avoided, lest some who join in the exercise, and perhaps the person himself who leads in it, should be too weary or sleepy to give a due attention." To this it may be added, that those who feel a difficulty in having family worship in the morning, on account of the early hour at which they are obliged to leave their homes, may generally

secure a profitable attention to it in the evening by having it soon after their return from their work. In many cases, however, the question is not one of inability, or even great inconvenience, but of rising a quarter of an hour earlier.

After all, it is only fair to admit that there may be cases where the *regular* fulfilment of this duty by the head of the household is impossible. Those whose employments call them from home before their children are up, and who do not return till after they are in bed, cannot, of course, gather them together for this purpose. But as the children grow older, the hour in the evening may not be too late, that in the morning not too early, for some of them; and a brief service, if it be reverent, is infinitely preferable to entire omission. Again, where the husband's employment from home renders his doing this impossible, what can be more appropriate than that the pious wife and mother should take his place? Surely no Christian woman need feel any difficulty in reading the word of God, and using some suitable form of prayer, in her own family. Indeed, in all cases where any difficulty is felt as to offering extempore prayer, nothing can be more suitable than the use of some appropriate form. Some may in any case prefer doing so. No slight or removable hindrance ought to be admitted as an excuse for neglecting this duty. On the other hand, much sacrifice ought to be made in order to fulfil it, wherever, by such sacrifice, it might become practicable. All who can do it, ought to do it; and where the husband, on whom the duty devolves, cannot, the wife should take his place.

The nature of the service, the time to be occupied in

it, and other points of detail, must be left very much to individual judgment. It may be well, however, to say that great length should always be avoided. Where children form a part of the household, and where there are servants, or other members of the family, unconverted, whom it is desirable to interest in religious duties, a long service is apt to excite weariness and disgust. A sufficient time for the devout reading of a short and appropriate passage of God's word, and for the offering of a prayer appropriate to the family wants and circumstances, will in all such cases prove better than a longer period spent in a formal religious service. The spirit and law of the apostle Paul may be well adopted with reference to this duty,—"I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."[1]

"The prayer of the head of the family," says Mr. James, "should be in a very peculiar degree *family* prayer. It should respect the children, the servants, the circumstances of the household. All should feel that the service belongs to *them*, and not merely to the individual who prays, or to the church and the world."

"Its effect," says Cecil, speaking of family religion, "will greatly depend on the sincerity of the head of the family, and on his mode of conducting the worship of the household. If his children and servants do not see his prayers exemplified in his temper and manners, they will be disgusted with religion. Tediousness will weary them. Fine language will shoot above them.

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 19.

Formality of connection or composition in prayer they will not comprehend. Gloominess or austerity of devotion will make them dread religion as a hard service. Let them be met with smiles. Let them be met as friends. Let them meet as for the most delightful service in which they can be engaged. Let them find it short, savoury, simple, plain, tender, heavenly."[1]

Monotony is to be sedulously avoided. Wisdom and thought, as well as devout feeling, are necessary, lest our family prayers should degenerate into "vain repetitions."[2] "I make it," says Cecil, "as *natural* as possible." All matters may be suitably included which are of family interest, and those also which are of interest to the church of God at large. This will give variety. Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton was accustomed to make lists of subjects to be referred to in his family prayers. When about to leave Northrepps for the duties of the parliamentary session, he especially referred to this fact, and to the work in which he expected to be engaged. The following extract from his papers will show in what spirit he did this :—

"In removing, we pray that that merciful Providence which has stood around us may continue; sheltered, refreshed, counselled, strengthened by Thee. Ward off danger, baffle our enemy, rob sin of its temptation, make us wholly in inward thoughts and outward deeds thine own. Be thou the mover of every work in which we engage, the counsellor to teach us what to say and do, the source of strength, confidence, and comfort. May we labour, not with eyeservice,

[1] Cecil's Remains. [2] Matt. vi. 7.

but in singleness of heart. Bless those rising from bondage [referring to the negroes in the West Indies], and all efforts on their behalf. Bless the spread of education and of thy truth."[1]

In the families of the Henrys, father and son, we should expect to find so important a duty attended to with a high sense of its value. Their method may not, in all its details, be practicable or even desirable for many in the hurried life of the present day. Yet it may be questioned whether a return to the less hurried religious life of those times would not serve favourably to balance, and even to counteract, that restless monotony of worldly care which is too characteristic of the present age, and which is too often connected with hasting to be rich.[2] One thing we may be quite sure of, that the devout spirit and deep earnestness with which these men carried out the idea of family religion are as much needed in our own day as in theirs.

Of Philip Henry his son says, "He made conscience, and made a business of family worship in all its parts."[3] In this duty he was uniform, steady, and constant, from the time he was first called to the charge of a family to his dying day. His doctrine, from Joshua xxiv. 15, was, "that family worship is family duty." He would say sometimes, "If the worship of God be not in the house, write 'Lord, have mercy on us,' upon the door, for there is a plague, a curse in it."[4]

[1] Life, by his Son.

[2] Prov. xxviii. 22. Compare 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, 17.

[3] In this respect the son fully followed his father's example.

[4] Alluding to the custom, during the plague in London, of marking the door with a large cross, and writing on it those words.

Another saying of his was, "He that makes his house a little church shall find that God will make it a little sanctuary."

The high value which he set upon this duty is shown in his method of fulfilling it. Nothing was allowed to interfere with its due performance. In the morning, before worldly business crowded in, his children, his servants, his visitors, and even his work men and day labourers, who were near at hand, were called together to join with him in this service. In the evening, "before the children and servants began to be sleepy," they met again, and then, as in the morning, the voice of rejoicing was heard in his tabernacle, and he, the priest in his own house, offered up the sweet incense of prayer, in the name of the High Priest who is even now "in the presence of God for us."[1]

His method of conducting the service was one which few, perhaps, could follow with advantage; but the devout aim and spirit manifest in it render it worthy of being described. He commenced with a short but very solemn prayer for the Divine presence and grace, particularly asking a blessing upon the Scripture about to be read. This was concluded with a doxology. A psalm was then sung, each member of the family having a book, so that it was sung through without reading the verses separately. Then came the reading of the Scripture in regular order, he sometimes pausing to bless God "affectionately" "for every book, and chapter, and verse, and line in the Bible." The reading was followed by an exposition, "plain, practical,

[1] Heb. ix. 24.

useful," in which he had "a peculiar excellence;" and that the practice might be continued in the families of his children, he bequeathed to his four daughters a copy each of "Poole's Annotations," together with "Mr. Burton's last and best translation of the singing psalms, requiring and requesting them to make daily use of the same, for the instruction, edification, and comfort of themselves and their families."[1]

After the exposition, "he required from his children some account of what they had heard," sometimes conversing plainly and familiarly with them about it, and then came the prayer. And this was emphatically *family prayer*. Family mercies, family sins, family blessings, were the main topics of his addresses at the throne of grace. The absent were especially remembered, and sometimes, in praying for his children, he would put up a separate petition for each child. Their birthdays were always noticed, with thanks for the gift of the child, and some special request on its behalf. The servants were prayed for, not only generally, but with a particular regard to their circumstances. Visitors shared in the petitions of the family supplication, and those who had especially desired his prayers. The dealings of Providence were noticed in a devout and trusting spirit. "Nor did he," adds his son, "ever forget to pray for the peace of Jerusalem." The children then on bended knees sought a blessing of him and of their mother, which was given "with great solemnity and affection."

Day by day, and year by year, through many scenes of trial, yet ever in the enjoyment of a calm and happy

[1] Life, by his Son.

piety, did this good man and pious householder maintain the habit of worship, never omitting it, even when he left home early and returned late. Prudence sometimes, under such circumstances, led him to shorten the service, but he would never wholly neglect it. And though, to modern methods of conducting it, it seems somewhat elaborate and lengthy, yet he so managed it, "as to make it a pleasure and not a task to his children and servants." Not all, however, have the power which he possessed of preventing such a service from becoming tedious, and a shorter and simpler plan will probably be found more suitable for ordinary use. Yet it must have been a delightsome service which welcomed and closed each day in that home sanctuary at Broad Oak.

How distinctly even now, through the mists of nearly two centuries, does this picture of Christian home-life rise before us! A house in which the service of God was the first thought and the last; a family trained for heaven; every domestic incident and relationship made a theme for solemn prayer; every day greeted with Divine songs of praise, and ended with words of child-like confidence in the care of a covenant-keeping God! We seem to see before us the pleasant assembly;—the venerable father, and loved and venerated mother, their children grouped quietly around them; the servants, workmen, and labourers, who had been called to rest awhile from their toil, that they might unite in the solemn service; the sojourner for the night, who, as a welcome guest, occupied the place of honour, and was invited to join their worship. We attend to the joyful hymn of praise preparing all hearts to listen to the

subsequent instruction. Our attention is riveted by the grave yet familiar manner in which the Scripture is read, and by the curt, pregnant sentences which cast light on obscure passages, and impress the truth upon the mind. Then we join in the prayer, so simple, yet so comprehensive, a prayer in which all must feel they have a part. Then, in the hushed stillness, the children seek their morning or evening blessing. And then all depart to their daily avocations, or to their quiet chambers, in peace.

How invigorating at the commencement, how soothing at the close of the day, must such a service have been to the devout mind! What a holy influence it must have exerted day by day upon the inmates of the house! What an influence it must have had upon the very order of the household itself! In Philip Henry's own quaint words, it was "like a hem to all their other business, to keep it from ravelling." Nor do we wonder to find it recorded that "many of his servants, by the blessing of God upon his diligent endeavour, got those good impressions upon their souls which they retained ever after, and blessed God with all their hearts that ever they came under his roof."[1] Well may we exclaim with Newton, "Happy is that family where the worship of God is constantly and conscientiously maintained. Such houses are temples in which the Lord dwells, and castles garrisoned by a Divine power."[2]

[1] Life, by his Son. [2] Newton's Letters.

CHAPTER X.

THE LORD'S DAY AT HOME.

WE have no need, in considering Christian home-life, to argue the sacred obligations of the Lord's day. The object of this chapter is to show how this day may be, as good Philip Henry called it, "the queen of days, the pearl of the week," to all the inmates of the house; how it may be identified with the early life of childhood as a happy day; how even children may be led to recognise

> . . . "The beauty of the Sabbath kept
> With conscientious reverence, as a day
> By the almighty Lawgiver pronounced
> Holy and blest."[1]

1. In order to this, the sacred obligations of the day must be faithfully maintained.

The great moral power of the Sabbath, and its great charm too, is in the fact of its Divine institution. No arrangement of convenience, no appropriation of a day to religious services by any legal enactment, could possibly stand in stead of this Divine ordinance. The recollection that God himself at the Creation blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; that he placed among the laws of unchanging moral obligation the command to "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy;" the fact of the transfer of the day

[1] Wordsworth.

of rest and holy service to the first day of the week, a day signalized by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, all combine to give to the observance of this day an interest that no day of human appointment, whatever charm of "hoar antiquity" it might have, could possibly possess. It is identified with our warmest Christian sympathies, with our loftiest Christian hopes.

And it is a prime condition of Christian home-life, that the sacred character of the day should be fully and faithfully maintained. Laxity here will be sure to induce, if it does not indeed betray, laxness of religious principle altogether. The Lord's day must be to children, from the earliest period of consciousness, a day "holy of the Lord, honourable;" a sacred day, God's own day, to be regarded, therefore, as distinct from all other days. Everything about the house, all the household and family arrangements, should show that it is held to be so by those who rule the house. Not only the cessation of ordinary worldly toil on that day, but the enforcement of wise restrictions upon the behaviour, the conversation, the general pursuits of the household, should accustom children to look upon it as set apart for holy purposes, a day which would be desecrated by the ordinary pursuits of this life.

This involves, with regard to children, the exercise of an amount of restraint on their conversation and behaviour, which to some may seem an unnecessary and even cruel limitation of their childish liberty. This restraint, however, will, if wisely enforced, be not a source of evil, but of good; and we shall show presently how, even by means of this restraint, the

day may be made not only a holy, but a happy day for children.

Restraint is necessarily implied in the very idea of law. We submit to have our liberty curtailed every day of our lives; but we do not complain of this, for it is the wisely appointed and even necessary condition of the enjoyment of liberty. Children must be more or less under restraint: they would not be happy if they were not. The laws of the household, the higher obligations of moral law, are put in force with respect to them, and promote their happiness, even sometimes against their will. No children are so wretched as those whose liberty knows no restriction.

Apply this to the law of the Christian Sabbath, and we have full justification for maintaining, even with regard to young children, in a way suited to their age and capacity, the sacred obligations of the day. It will be a witness to them of law which must be enforced, on the all-sufficient ground, that God has commanded it. And its connection with the glorious hopes of the gospel will furnish an opportunity of associating it in their minds with emotions of joy. Moreover, the strict obedience thus enforced becomes a habit, and passes, as the reason is developed, into an act of the individual will, so that the solemn obligation becomes a delight. Indeed, there should never be any question allowed to the child as to the obligation; nor will it be productive of harm, but altogether of good, that thus at the very outset of its life it is taught to recognise, in the constantly recurring observance of a positive institution, a Supreme Authority, whose decisions do not admit of

being questioned. Children cannot too early learn that their whole life is girt about with law, that they are under the most solemn obligations to render implicit, unhesitating obedience to the declarations of the Divine will.

2. All the arrangements of the household life should be in accordance with this teaching, and should help to keep this day as a sacred day, distinct from all other days. It is a day above all others—"the best of all the seven." And we only fulfil its purpose when, by all the arrangements of the house, and all the order of our outward life, we show that we regard it as a holy day, consecrated to holy service, separated by the Divine command, and, by our reverent observance of that command, from all the week beside.

This distinction requires that the ordinary household life should be modified, so as to meet the demands of the day as a day of rest. Where the week is spent in manual labour or in the engagements of business, this is to some extent secured by the mere cessation of the week's toil. But more than this must characterize the day, even in such cases, in order to its right observance; and in many private families this outward distinction between the week-day and the Sunday does not exist. In all cases, therefore, household pursuits and employments must be so ordered, that the day may be marked by servants and children as one to be kept holy. All household work that can be avoided should be relinquished; all labour, both of man and beast, that can, consistently with the claims of duty and humanity, be either done the day before, or postponed till the day after, be abandoned. And what is necessary to be done should, if possible,

be done so quietly and speedily, as to give even to the necessary labour the idea of rest.

Such an arrangement of the household should especially have regard to the children of a house. The books, and even the amusements of the little ones, must mark the day. Every effort must be made to associate Sunday in the minds of children with calm and peaceful enjoyment. Special picture-books for the younger, kept for Sunday and regarded as a treat; entertaining and instructive ones for the elder, of which happily there is now-a-days no lack; the suppression of noisy and boisterous games, while every facility is afforded for that physical exercise which with all children is a necessary of life, will help to give the Sunday a character of its own, and invest it, not with a solemn dulness, but with a holy and chastened joy.

"The general aspect of this holy day which we would encourage," writes Dr. Hamilton, "is not that of sternness, of morbid sensitiveness, of crouching will-worship, but that of settled, solemn stillness. One word would interpret all we desire, as best agreeing to it, without and within,—*serenity*. We rejoice when it breaks in elemental peace, with balmy breath and cloudless beauty. We rejoice when it departs with the tranquillity of a sunset which is disturbed by no angry blast or tempest rack. Yet more do we rejoice when the tumult of the people stills. The collisions of life no longer chafe. The dizzy wheels of society stop. City and village, temple and home, lie bathed in an unearthly calm."[1]

[1] "The Sabbath," by Dr. R. W. Hamilton.

3. The Sabbath day should be regarded by Christian parents as giving them special opportunity for the religious instruction of their children.

If the household arrangements be made with due regard to the sacred claims of the day, it will be that on which the mother will have more leisure for this purpose than on any other day, and in many cases it is the only one on which the father is able to take any very active part in their directly religious instruction. The public services of the sanctuary have of course the first claim. The habit of regular attendance at the house of God is one which can scarcely be too early commenced. But the younger children, at any rate, cannot attend an evening service; and even where, as they grow older, they become accustomed to do so, the afternoon is still available for private use. Either the afternoon or evening, perhaps to some extent both, furnish golden opportunities for family training. The pious father and mother, duly watching for the souls of their children, will embrace these. All is in their favour. All the conditions are helpful. The sanctity of the day; the cessation of worldly business; the quiet of the house; the service of the sanctuary, which they have attended together; the peaceful meal, to which all have been gathered, on the one day of the week when it could be enjoyed without hurry or interruption; the sense of home affection and home enjoyment which everywhere reigns,—all combine to point out the supreme advantages of the Lord's day for the cultivation of "piety at home," for the instruction of the children of the house in the truths of religion.

Let us suppose that, while the mother's attention is

occupied with the younger children, the father gathers around him on the Sunday afternoon his older boys and girls, to lead them in the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace. He is confined by no rigid plan, but endeavours, by variety of method and cheerfulness of manner, to excite an interest in the sacred themes of his conversation. Some narrative, perhaps, of the sacred Word is read, its historical associations explained, its allusions to Oriental customs, or its employment of Oriental imagery illustrated, its correspondence with other parts of Scripture pointed out, its prophecy referred to its fulfilment, its practical lessons deduced. Then questions are asked, to impress the facts and truths upon the memory; or difficulties, felt and becomingly expressed, are explained. A judicious use of the time allotted, care taken that the engagement shall not become monotonous and wearisome, a few simple words of prayer, and they disperse, with new ties to bind them to a parent's heart, with feet turned in the paths of Divine knowledge,—who can tell with what results!

The evening comes, and while the father, and perhaps one or two of the elder children, again go up to the solemn worship of God's house, the mother gathers the rest around her, to fulfil at home the hallowed purpose of the day.[1] Simpler and more elementary instruction is hers, but not less valuable, nor demanding less of fervent piety and earnest thought. She

[1] The allotment of time for this object must, of course, be arranged according to circumstances. In some places, there is no public worship in the afternoon, in others, not in the evening. Generally speaking, however, one or the other of these times, or parts of each, may be secured for home instruction.

must interest in order to instruct, and the picture-book will probably come into frequent requisition. The narrative, instead of being read, may be detailed in her own words, often interrupted—yet how pleasantly!—by some curious question from one of the eager listeners around her. Lessons of love and wisdom, suited to their capacity and need; representations of the gracious Saviour, in all the gentleness of his aspect toward the little ones, and in the greatness of his sufferings for us sinners; the story of his life on earth; of his apostles,—their journeys, labours, and sufferings; the narratives of the Old Testament,—so charming to children, as well as so full of instruction to mature minds, may thus occupy the pleasant Sunday evening, till bedtime comes—all too soon—and the sweet strains of childish voices joining with the mother's in the simple song of praise, close a day of peace and love. To how many memories are such sabbath evenings precious! What mother, with any right sense of her responsibility, would neglect to avail herself of such opportunities!

Referring to this subject, and speaking of the Sabbath of our Puritan forefathers, Dr. Hamilton says,—"They began with the infant mind. They sought early conversion. They pondered that saying, 'While there is hope.'[1] They knew that if that ductile, ingenuous temper was left untaught and unsanctified, little 'hope' could be entertained. They improved the seed-time; they bent the sapling in its pliancy. The evening came, the household Sabbath's claim and share.[2] The children, if advancing in youth, now

[1] Prov. xix. 18. [2] Evening services were not then customary.

repaired to different apartments, conducted, according to sex, by their appropriate guides. A father counselled his boys, a mother instructed her daughters. Catechism was heard. Free questions were elicited. There was a review of what had been that day preached. The lad leaving his roof was warned and blessed. The girl cowered like the dove beneath the wing stretched over her. There, at the father's side, at the mother's knee, was the true school of character and principle. That made their generations strong. Instead of the fathers were the children."[1]

4. Every effort should be used to make the Lord's day *a happy day* at home.

Gloom and sadness are never so inappropriate as on the Christian Sabbath. Holy joy is the spirit in which its requirements are best met, its duties most faithfully fulfilled. It is a day of Christian triumph, the day of the risen Lord. It is associated with all the glorious hopes of the gospel. It is in itself as a day set apart for Divine worship, a proclamation of peace and salvation. The home, therefore, should especially share in this joy. It is His day by whom the sacred ties of family relationship were appointed,—His day, who, while he sojourned among us in the flesh, put, both by example and precept, such honour upon this relationship. His spirit of deep joy—joy too deep and real for unseemly mirth—should characterize the household on this day.

[1] "The Sabbath," by Dr. R. W. Hamilton.

There can be no doubt that the author of the "Pilgrim's Progress" drew from life. Those who wish to see what Puritan instruction was, will do well to read the account of the catechizing of Christiana's children by Prudence, while they were staying at the "Porter's Lodge."

Religious services, and the more direct means of religious instruction at home, will be profitably varied by more familiar intercourse. The elder branches of the family will require opportunities for such converse as the day allows and sanctions. A healthy, cheerful recognition of family relationships and claims is perfectly in harmony with a full regard to the sacred obligations of the Sabbath. Parents and children separated, or having but few opportunities of meeting during the week, will be quite in keeping with the spirit of the day in spending the intervals of religious worship or instruction in familiar conversation,—

> "Such as it behoves
> Man to maintain, and such as God approves."
>
> COWPER.

The influence of such Sundays at home will never be lost by those who have once enjoyed them. The home is thus made the centre of religious impressions and associations, in a manner which cannot fail to have a lasting influence. Moreover, to have an attractive home on the Sunday is one of the greatest safeguards against those snares which, in the shape of Sunday pleasures and Sunday excursions abroad, are spread so temptingly in the way of young men and women, especially of the working and commercial classes, in our day. To enable young people to find pleasure in staying at home on the Sunday, to help them to acquire the habit of doing so by making them feel that keeping the day holy is also the way of making it a happy day, may prove not only a means of preserving them from most destructive temptations, but of guiding otherwise wandering feet in the way of peace.

Christian employers should look to this. Wherever apprentices and assistants form part of the family, they, as well as the household servants, should be included in this care. It is not enough that they are not required to work; some efforts must be made to interest them, and keep them from wandering on the Sabbath. It is not enough, either, that they are required to go once or twice to the house of God; provision should be made for their comfort, and, if possible, for their religious instruction at home. Instructive books may be provided. Perhaps some amount of friendly conversation on religious subjects may be practicable. If one plan fails, let another be tried. No pains should be spared by Christian masters and mistresses to make Sunday *a happy day at home* for those in their employment. Let it be distinguished as the day of cheerful intercourse. Let there be nothing of gloom or moroseness. Let the domestic affections find on this day their fullest, loveliest development. Let the observing minds of children, let every member of the household, see how beautiful a thing true piety is. Let them share in the pleasures of the Lord's day at home. Let them learn thus to say, as the language of their own hearts,—

> "In holy duties, let the day,
> In holy pleasures, pass away.
> How sweet a Sabbath thus to spend,
> In hope of one that ne'er shall end!"

Every effort must be used to make this day a happy one for *young* children. It should always be "pleasant Sunday" for them. In order to this, the rule laid down at the commencement of this chapter must

be carefully observed. They must be allowed wise liberty, if we would have them subject to wise restraint. They will need both exercise and amusement. But for all who are beyond the age of infancy, such recreation may be made subservient to the higher objects of the day. The house of God, the religious observances and instructions appropriate to the Sabbath, need not be tedious to children. Almost all depends upon *early* training. How frequently, almost universally, is it the case that children love going to the house of God, and are grieved and disappointed if anything prevents their doing so. And there is no doubt—as the instances already given prove—that religious instruction may be made delightful to children. Even the amusements of the little ones may be made to tell of the day. The book, or perhaps the toy, kept specially for Sunday, will associate it with pleasant memories. If a merely strict observance of the day as a day of rigid silence, during which children must neither move nor talk, nor in any way enjoy themselves, be enforced,—if no effort be made to interest them, and they are simply doomed to a painful and unnatural restraint, the day will be a day of wretchedness, and it will be well if they do not learn to hate religion and all that belongs to it. But the wise parent will take care that his children do not spend such Sabbaths. He will require its observance. He will see that proper restraint is exercised; but it will also be his aim to make the Sabbath "a delight,"[1] a day which they shall learn to love, a day which shall be associated, in their young imaginations,

[1] Isa. lviii. 13.

with a charm above all the days of the week, with a grace and beauty peculiarly its own.

The Lord's day, thus spent, will send its influence onward through all the days of the week. The homely adage is a true one, "A Sabbath well spent brings a week of content." Lord Chief Justice Hale's well-known testimony sums up the experience of many, "That a due observance of the duties of the Lord's day brought a blessing to him on the rest of his time, and made the coming week a prosperous one with him." "We need not inquire," writes Dr. Hamilton, referring to the holy observance of this day by the Puritans, "what was their week. That home would know no idleness, no contented ignorance, no constrained hospitality, no fretful bickering, no controversial strife. Worship still dressed its altar, prayer and praise still awoke, instruction and discipline still prevailed. The pastor was often seen at its hearth, the welcome casuist, comforter, and guest. Good men resorted thither, and left behind a blessing. That wicket was the gate of heaven. The law of kindness was on every lip. They forbore one another, they preferred one another. Some of us knew the likenesses well. We have seen the counterparts. Such were the families to which birth added us. We declaim no inventions, we draw no pictures, we speak no unknown things."[1]

With the eloquent words of the same writer addressed to Christian parents, let this chapter close. "Our appeal is to Christian parents. We ask you not what you most desire for your children. It *cannot*

[1] "The Sabbath," by Dr. R. W. Hamilton.

be wealth, class distinction, worldly alliance. You 'travail in birth that Christ may be formed in them.' To see them called by Divine grace ere you die, would be to turn your death into a rapture. For this you would sacrifice all. You had rather leave them paupers than aliens from the covenant. Do you *respect the Sabbath, and teach them to respect it?* Is it the memorial of your roof-tree? Is every duty and pleasure, journey and visit, subordinated to it? . . . Do you let them see that nothing is suffered to interfere with it? . . . Do you instruct them in the great peculiarities of your faith? Do you impress upon them the ordinance of this day? . . . *The remembrance of the Sabbath day is the life of Christian families.*"

CHAPTER XI.

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE.

PEOPLE who live together must of necessity become familiar one with the other. They meet at all hours of the day. They talk together of matters of common concern. They have a mutual interest in each other's habits and pursuits. They learn one another's modes of thinking and feeling. They become acquainted with one another's faults and foibles, and they also know each other's graces and virtues.

This familiar association has a great deal to do with the growth and maintenance of family affection. It helps to create and keep alive a feeling of personal interest in those with whom we are associated. Thus passengers in the same ship contract intimacies which they would not have dreamed of,—for which, indeed, they would have had no opportunity,—in the intercourse of ordinary life. And those who live in the same house contract mutual attachments, mainly from the fact of being daily associated in the free companionship of common life.

This is one of the conditions of home-life designed by our merciful Creator for our happiness and highest well-being. It is this which invests us with such an influence upon one another at home for good or evil. For it is impossible that any member of a household should be without some influence upon all the members of it; and a wise use of the necessary

intimacies of home will greatly conduce to the spiritual as well as the temporal benefit of those with whom we live.

"It is," writes Isaac Taylor, "an admirable provision of the Divine wisdom which affords us the opportunity of knowing best those whom we ought most to love and succour. The unlooked-for incidents of family history, and its sudden excitements, and its arduous occasions, bring the individuals of the home circle within the sanctuary of each other's bosoms. And then there is always going on in each mind an unobserved process of induction, wherein even the listless actions and trivial expressions of every hour go to form an estimate, in the mind of each, of the worth and quality of the others, until each feels that he has almost as perfect a knowledge of the heart of brother, sister, parent, child, husband, wife, as of his own. It is on the solid ground of this familiar knowledge that the domestic affections take their tranquil standing. . . . It is this home familiarity, this domestic perfection of knowledge, that opens the sluices of sensibility, vivifying every sympathy, and making the sentient principle of each common to all, so as in a manner to blend identities, and to suffuse consciousness through the social body. The many become one by the mutuality of every power of enjoyment and of suffering."[1]

How, then, may this familiar intercourse be made to subserve the best ends? How may the affections, which are, at least in the great majority of cases, strengthened by this intercourse until they acquire the force of habits, be used as a power for good?

[1] "Saturday Evening."

One condition certainly is, that this intercourse, however familiar, must always be courteous. No relationship, however near, can justify the violation of those rules of politeness by which society at large regulates and restrains individual selfishness. To fail in this respect towards those who love us, presuming on the strength of their affection, is to endanger our affection for them, and theirs for us, as well as to encourage in ourselves an unamiable and selfish disposition. Husbands and wives owe to each other all outward manifestations of respect and esteem. Parents owe it to their children to cultivate, in their intercourse with them, a habit of gentleness in speech and manner, and never to encourage them, by their own example, to adopt an angry tone amongst themselves. Masters owe it to their servants to treat them with courtesy, and servants to their masters to maintain all the forms of respect, "not answering again."[1] Children owe it to their parents to show them reverence in word and deed, using as respectful a demeanour towards them as they would to any stranger of the same age and rank. Brothers and sisters owe it to each other to act with gentleness, forbearance, and mutual kindness.

These are principles readily enough admitted, but too often imperfectly carried out, just where regard to them is of greatest importance, at home. To apply the principles of the gospel to the minute duties and cares of daily life requires a prayerful thoughtfulness, which must be cultivated if it is to be possessed. Bring our Lord's golden rule into constant

[1] Titus ii. 9.

operation in daily life, and there would be no lack of kindness or courtesy in our most familiar intercourse. How many selfish thoughts would it rebuke! To how many unkind words would it deny utterance! To how many kind actions would it prompt! What thoughtfulness for others it would induce! How many quarrels might be prevented, how many disputes adjusted, how many harsh judgments rescinded or suspended, if only this law was written on our hearts, and was made the guide of our common life. But then we must learn how to apply it.

The habit of *consideration for others*, taught in the word of God,[1] would go far to smooth the difficulties of social intercourse, and render it subservient to the highest good. It would enable us to make allowance for diversity of natural disposition, for defects of education or training. It would teach us to feel for each other's infirmities, temptations, and difficulties. It would repress hasty, harsh, and unfeeling criticisms and rebukes. It would prevent us from expecting too much from others,—one of the great causes, by the way, of domestic and social unhappiness. It would teach us in all things to "render to all their due."[2] Scripture abounds with laws for our guidance in social intercourse, and none who make it "a lamp to their feet, and a light to their path,"[3] need be at any loss as to their duty here. The difficulty is to get its pure and holy principles wrought into the texture of our daily home-life.

In the ordinary social intercourse of parents and children, it is of the utmost importance to secure

[1] Phil. ii. 4. [2] Rom. xiii. 7. [3] Psa. cxix. 105.

full and unreserved confidence on both sides. The children must feel assured of their father's sympathy with, and of their mother's interest in, all their childish pursuits. Nothing is more chilling to the heart of a child, especially as it is getting beyond the earlier period of childhood, than a parent's indifference to the trifling details of its childish life. And how saddening to it, closing up at once, and perhaps for ever, the avenues to its confidence, is the harsh or hasty expression of contempt! Unhappy children, but still more unhappy parents, who fail thus to win the trust of a child's warm heart, and who thus lose some of the most valuable opportunities of religious instruction and impression. Let fathers and mothers remember their own childhood, and seek to make their children their companions, to enter into all their feelings, to interest themselves in all that interests them. Little things are the great events of childhood. Little difficulties are its great troubles. Pursuits trifling to men are its great aims. But a large-hearted love will feel an interest in these little things. Let the child feel that its lessons, its amusements, its gardening, its boat-building, its doll-dressing, or what not, are matters of interest to its parents. "The children were up-stairs," writes Dr. Chalmers, describing one of his arrivals from Edinburgh, "while I settled with the porter in the lobby, and went afterwards to my own bed-room. I heard them come down in a very gleesome style, but they had to wait in the lobby till I came out, which when I did, they positively quivered and danced with pure gladness. I felt the cat and kitten principle most powerfully towards them, and spent a very joyous and thankful hour with

them." Is not this better than to see children standing in awe of their parents, and beginning in consequence to lead a reserved life, a life sullenly shut up in itself, or seeking the confidence of strangers, because the warm sympathy of their hearts has never been drawn out, but rather harshly repressed by their parents?

"Obedience may be enforced, confidence never. But it may be won, and for each one's sake it is worth the winning. To be a child among his children is one of the finest qualifications of a wise and good parent. No fear in this case that familiarity will breed contempt. We could almost say that no sacrifices are too great or costly to attain this object, only that in reality no sacrifices are required.

"'Father is coming,' sometimes whispered one brother to another, as they played together; and their feeling was that of timidity and embarrassment, almost of dread, as their father came near. At times their toys were put out of sight, and generally they discontinued their active sports until the unpleasant visitation was over. Why was this? The father was a conscientiously kind one, and the boys knew it. On the other hand, the boys were properly amusing themselves, and the father knew it. The reason, then, is plain. There was a want of confidence. Some necessary ingredients had been wanting in the moral education of those children, which should have led them at once, and instinctively, to know that their parent would have rejoiced to see them happy, and to say, 'Father, father, do come and play with us.'"[1]

[1] "Home Education," by G. E. Sargent.

We have seen what pains Legh Richmond took to maintain this freedom of intercourse between himself and his children, and with what good effect as to their religious training. The thought must commend itself to all Christian minds that the Christian parent should be, in all matters relating to religion, the child's first confidant. We should naturally expect this, yet how rarely is it the case! Some children, it is true, are of a naturally reserved disposition, and always shrink from expressing their most serious thoughts; but it is too often the case that where reserve of this kind exists between parents and their children, it has been produced or fostered by something defective in their social intercourse. Many a child has longed to talk with its parents upon its religious thoughts and feelings, who has shrunk from doing so because it has seemed so formidable a task.

In writing of his own conversion, the late Rev. J. A. James has some important observations on this point. He says, "It was not to be looked for that my dear relations could long be ignorant of the change which had taken place, or indifferent about it. I could not at first gain courage to inform them of it, and, indeed, it came on so slowly and imperceptibly, that it was difficult for me to decide when and how to make the first communication. It is a matter of notoriety that there is a strange, perhaps sinful, reserve between near relations on the subject of personal and experimental religion. There is scarcely any subject on which it is so difficult to converse as this. Probably this is partly instinctive, the soul being thus taken off from man and led more directly to God; but, like other instincts, it may be carried too

far, and become criminally excessive, and, were religious education conducted as it should be, and religion in that high state to which it should attain, there would be less of this religious bashfulness than there is between religious parents and their children."[1]

One remedy for this may be found in making the truths of religion topics of familiar conversation. The "things that make for peace" may be talked of "when we sit in the house, and when we walk by the way,"[2] without at all lessening the reverence with which they ought to be regarded. Children should be encouraged to express themselves freely and familiarly about the truths of the Bible, and upon the question of personal religion. They will generally do this readily enough when they are quite young; and if the habit of conversing with them upon these topics is kept up, they will continue to do so, though it may be with somewhat more reserve and caution as they grow older. The misfortune—the *fault*—is, that in too many cases, as children pass beyond the age of early childhood, and become associated, at school or elsewhere, with those of their own age, they are left too much to themselves. Parents do not maintain that friendly, sympathizing intercourse with them which they have with their younger children. It may sometimes be difficult to maintain this confidence,

[1] "Autobiography," in Life, by Rev. R. W. Dale.

Perhaps an additional cause of the too common reserve in religious conversation between members of the same family may be found in the too intimate knowledge which each possesses of the others' failings.

[2] Deut. vi. 7.

—it must always be difficult to recover it if it is once lost; but in either case the attempt is worth making with care and diligence, nor will a truly Christian parent be discouraged by even repeated failures. So much of happiness in after-life depends on it, that the most earnest thought, the most fervent prayer, the most persevering effort, will be well bestowed to maintain or regain it.

One word of caution, however. This confidence cannot be forced. It must grow, and it may sometimes be of slow growth. If so, we must watch it with patience, and water it with prayer, that we may train it at the right time, in the right direction. Religious lecturing and religious scolding will not accomplish our object. Direct questioning will most frequently fail. The expression of opinion or feeling should rather be elicited than asked for. And if the subject seems distasteful, it will be better not to press it. Silence, under such circumstances, will produce a greater impression, will awaken thoughtfulness. Opportunities must be watched for. Words must be "spoken in season." An occasional remark in a free conversation on other topics will often be most successful. Above all, let children see, in your affectionate sympathy with them, that you have their true interest and happiness at heart. This will prepare the way for confidence in matters of highest concernment.

In the beautiful relationship of brothers and sisters, the free and confiding intercourse of home-life has one of the finest fields for its development, and it should be the endeavour of parents in all ways to encourage it. Perfect affection and mutual confidence, sympathy

with each other's feelings and pursuits, oneness of spirit, though there may be diversity of age and disposition, seem the natural results of this relationship. A home where the fraternal relationship is lovingly fulfilled, under the influence of Christian principle, must be a happy home. But how so to fulfil it must, like other good things, be learned. Instinctive affection may be trained into habits of kindness and self-denial; but if this be not done, natural selfishness will, as the feeling of individuality grows stronger, overcome the natural affection. Hence it is incumbent upon parents to watch, lest self-will and self-interest gain the sway, and convert the intercourse of their children into scenes of perpetual quarrelling,—of tyranny on the part of the strong, and anger, waiting its time for revenge, on the part of the weak.

Such qualities must be cultivated in them as will endear them to each other, as will foster and deepen the feeling of natural affection. Every day will furnish opportunities for doing this. Fairness and impartiality in judging between children in their little disputes, will soon check the tendency to take advantage of each other which they naturally exhibit, and will foster in the children themselves habits of fairness and justice. They may be taught thus to fulfil the law of love, and so will get their mutual affection deepened and strengthened. Even the very little ones will soon learn to "bear one another's burdens;" and so doing, will grow in love for those whose burdens they willingly bear. Especially is it of importance that the elder children should be taught to practise this of their own accord towards the younger. It is a sign of good for them, and for the parents too, and a promise of

still greater good in the future, when a child of its own accord gives up a favourite toy to a younger brother or sister, "because he's the baby, you know." Baby, in turn, will learn the same lesson of love.

Nowhere is the beauty of this relationship more fully seen than in the conduct of elder towards younger children. What a source of misery in a family is a selfish, headstrong, tyrannical elder brother; or a no less selfish, because merely indolent and careless, elder sister! Occupying a position which, next to that of the parents, is perhaps most influential in a family of children, they are the sources of incalculable mischief if their position be misused; and, on the other hand, they will be the best helpers of their parents in promoting a holy and happy home-life if they rightly appreciate and use their advantages. The younger ones will look up to them for example; and as they behave towards their parents and to each other, and to their younger brothers and sisters, so will these learn to behave in their turn.

The value of a happy intercourse among children during their residence at home cannot be too highly estimated. In a few years they must separate,—some, perhaps, never to meet again in this world. It will be an unfailing joy to them then, that in the quiet sanctities of their home-life they learned to trust one another, to help one another, to have free and familiar intercourse with one another. And, on the other hand, how sad if, when they separate, they become thenceforth isolated, lose all interest in each other's pursuits, and neither rejoice in each other's prosperity nor seek to help each other in adversity! Unhappily, this is too often the case. To some extent, such

separation of interests is unavoidable. Brothers and sisters become settled in life, and have homes and children of their own. Different pursuits, and perhaps different positions in life, to which they may in providence be called, will necessarily narrow the range of their mutual sympathies. The old days at home, when they were all together, and lived in the constant knowledge of each other's pursuits and habits, can never return, neither can the sort of interest in each other which was then felt. But there need not be any loss of affection. There may still be mutual interest and mutual sympathy between them. And there will be, if, at home, the affectionate intercourse, which a home-life ought to draw forth, has been wisely cultivated. "His surviving relations declare with pleasure," writes Matthew Henry's biographer, "that they have not known the least angry or unkind word pass between him and his sisters while they lived together in their father's house; they lived in unity and love, and it was neither lost nor lessened when they were separated and placed in families; brotherly love continued to the very last."

Very much of the happiness of a family depends on its domestic servants. They constitute for the time being a part of it, and are intimately associated with its interests. No pious head of a household can feel indifferent to their welfare. They have a higher claim upon us than any arising out of the pecuniary contract by which they become bound to fulfil our commands. Divine Providence has placed them under our care, and made us to a great extent responsible for their well-being. It depends very much on us what kind of influences they shall be subjected to,

what kind of moral training they shall have while dwelling under our roof. The order and discipline of the house; the respect paid to religion; the training and behaviour of the children; above all, the spirit and temper of the master and mistress, will decide this.

Temper, if not everything, is of vast importance in the intercourse between master or mistress and servants. A naturally refined and courteous disposition, or the delicacy of a cultivated mind, will often prevent those ebullitions of temper which are even more degrading to the mistress than they are injurious to the servant; but there are many in whom fault-finding has become such a matter of habit, and to whom harsh and imperious tones have grown so familiar, that they go on doing mischief to themselves and their servants without thinking of it, and, with the best intentions, destroy the quietude and happiness of their homes.

Reproof will doubtless be sometimes needful. There need be no relaxation of proper discipline. But even reproof may be given with courtesy, in a gentle manner and in a Christ-like spirit. The best ordered households are those which are governed with the fewest harsh or angry words. "Forbearing threatening"[1] is an apostolic injunction: and the reason by which it is sustained is the most solemn one, "knowing that your Master also is in heaven." It may be fairly doubted, too, whether *scolding* is not always harmful. A mild and dignified reproof, so given as to show that it is not to be regarded as "idle words," will have more effect; and it will not leave a

[1] Ephes. vi. 9.

sin upon the conscience of the reprover, nor wound the self-respect of the person reproved. It is a sad and painful exhibition when Christian masters or mistresses allow themselves to speak to their servants in a tone of passion or contempt.

An anonymous writer thoughtfully observes, that "habitual want of consideration for persons in a dependent position, far oftener than ill-nature, suffers them to exhibit towards their servants a hardness and brusqueness of manner, which, if displayed towards themselves, even by one having the right to direct them, would fire their bosoms with indignation. Nothing but a thoughtless contempt of persons filling a menial situation need prohibit our showing them, in the most delicate way, the deference due from one human being to another. Nothing whatever is lost by putting command into the shape of request; by veiling the hard lineaments of authority in words and tones which shall give them a pleasing appearance; by indicating a predominant wish to pay homage to the just susceptibility of a servant in the very act of prescribing the service expected to be performed; by gratefully recognising that service when performed. One may treat even a kitchen-maid as obligingly, and with as manifest a delicacy of consideration, as a duchess; and although the manner in each case would necessarily be different, the object of it, the wish to please, might be as safely made manifest in the one as in the other."[1]

[1] As an example of the manner in which the intercourse between pious masters and their servants should be carried on, we may refer to the case of Boaz as recorded in the Book of Ruth. "And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee."

Pious masters and mistresses will care for the comfort and moral welfare of their servants. Many have had to bless God for the day when they took service in a Christian household; for they have thus learned, what they never knew before, the happiness and beauty of true religion. The daily acknowledgment of religion in family worship; the observance of the Lord's day, and of the ordinances of public worship; good books provided for Sunday and evening reading; a word fitly spoken now and then, for which the loan of such books will furnish opportunity; and with all this, and without which these things will be worse than useless, justice and fairness in all dealings with them, not exacting from them more than is due; evident sympathy with them and interest in them; a courteous manner, and lips on which is the law of kindness, will help to make the relation between servants and their employers, whether in the house, the shop, or the field, one of mutual benefit and goodwill. Such conduct will, in the end, *pay* best. But, what to the Christian man or woman will be of far greater moment, it may prove to be the means of securing, by the Divine blessing, spiritual results of incalculable value. It was not, we may believe, by harsh compulsion, but by a holy example and influence, that Abraham commanded his household after him to keep the way of the Lord.

Beside the ordinary relationships of the household which involve constant social intercourse, there are others which may be termed accidental, but which demand at least a passing notice. Among these is the relationship which subsists between the young and the old, where an older relative or relatives form, for the

days! How they cling to him! But alas! it is not always so. Old age may be exacting and querulous; or it may be wanting in self-respect and dignity, calling forth pity from the experienced, and contempt from the young. Sad, very sad, is such a setting of the sun of life. But where piety gives to experience a beauty and dignity of its own, and makes the close of life, like the close of day, suggestive of all that is calm and hopeful, age will not fail to inspire sympathy, and affection will exercise a hallowing influence over the social circle in which its lot is cast.

"Above all these," says the apostle, "put on charity, *which is the bond of perfectness.*"[1] It is so in the household. It is this which smooths the rugged ways of life, and removes out of them the sharp stones against which we should stumble and be wounded. It is the controlling power by which the machinery of social life is kept in harmonious action. It is the motive power which impels us to make these arrangements of social life subservient to higher purposes. It is this "which gives the flower of life its lustre and perfume." It is the essential condition of all social intercourse of the highest kind. A household torn by dissensions, the members of which are separated from one another by envy, hatred, and uncharitableness, and who nurse their petty animosities till they cannot speak peaceably to one another, can never know what this intercourse truly is. This will lead to adjustment of difficulties, or, still better, will prevent their occurrence. It will quicken mutual sympathies, and lead to unselfish concern for each other's interests.

[1] Col. iii. 14.

Parents and children, masters and servants, will feel that they have here a common bond of union, and this feeling will insensibly influence their whole life. And where this Christian love does not exist in the hearts of a household, because all are not possessors of Christian faith, then the more does it rest with those who do possess it, to manifest it in all their social intercourse.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BREAKING UP OF THE HOME.

NOTHING more sadly convinces us that this is not our rest, than the disruption of our dearest and purest earthly ties. We can endure, perhaps, that our cherished schemes of worldly success or ambition should be thwarted; we can bear the changes which occur in the ordinary course of human events; we can think with calmness, even of the passing away of the great and good, whose names are precious to us. But the home! That is a retreat we would fain keep inviolate. We would shield it from the changes of life. We would defend it from the fatal shaft of death. We would live on with those we love, secure against all calamity but the advance of kindly age, and would then, if possible, pass away together, hand in hand, through the dark valley to the regions of light.

Alas! sin and sin's consequences have destroyed the inviolability of home. Painful experience sooner or later teaches us all this lesson. We turn from the turmoil of the world without us, to see vacant places, to listen for now silent voices in the sacred precincts of the home sanctuary. Our loved ones were, and are not. The home circle is broken. Its bright light is dimmed. We who remain draw closer together; our hearts beat thick, our tears gather, we dare not trust ourselves to speak. There is one less to care for, work

for, pray for, now. One less to be thought of in the thousand little arrangements of daily life. And that, the one, perhaps, who filled a very large space in our thoughts, and in whom our very life, in all its pursuits and interests, was bound up. There is some family or business anxiety to be consulted about;—we must ponder it alone. There is something of interest to tell on returning home, but there is no one to tell it to now. Memory is busy in us. Days gone by, events almost forgotten, come vividly before us, and force themselves upon our attention. Things to be regretted, but for which now no regret can be expressed. Things that ought to have been said or done, the opportunity for which is now for ever gone. Things pleasant, now saddened by the thought that we must enjoy them alone. Things painful, which now, in the recollection of them, inflict a yet sharper pang. How much kindness that might have been shown, how many unfaithfully performed duties that now never can be discharged! All is changed to us. The better part of our nature seems benumbed. There is a sense of loneliness which no society can remedy. There is for us henceforth a loss, an irreparable loss to bear.

Kindly time may indeed deaden the smart of the wound. Divine grace may sanctify the sorrow, and turn it into deeper joy than the world can give, but the loss remains. The sympathizing heart beats for us no more. The welcome greeting is no longer to be looked for; the kind, yet searching glance, which was so quick to catch the meaning of the clouded brow, or to respond to the brightened look, no longer beams upon us. Our hearts crave and are not satisfied.

"Oh! for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still."

"The day," writes Dr. Vaughan, "when this medical report first reached me" (respecting the threatened loss of his much-loved son), "was the darkest day in my history. This stroke came not on the branch only, it seemed to descend to the centre of the root. I felt that the severance threatened left my very nature poor. It was not so much an outward object as myself, my better self, which seemed to be passing away from me. Hopes cherished through half a life fell like a faded flower. Untruthfulness seemed to have come into the memories of the past. The visions of the future vanished. The void produced a heart-sickness such as men do not put into words. But the son did not charge God foolishly, and I trust the father did not. We had both been made to know in whom we had believed."

The Christian home will not be a scene of unmitigated sorrow, even when robbed of its richest treasures. How grand and full of meaning are the words, written as they were to individuals dwelling amid heathen superstitions and heathen philosophies,—both alike unable to cast any light upon the region beyond the tomb,—"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."[1] The religion which heightens the endearments of our homes, provides the richest consolation for those who mourn over their invasion by death,—"Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."[2] We are not

[1] 1 Thess. iv. 13. [2] 1 Thess. iv. 14.

finally separated. In him "they live whom we call dead." The perishable perishes, but that which is imperishable remains, and to that we are united still. The bond between the spirits of the just is not broken by the destruction of the temporary ties of earth. The real bond of union is eternal life in Christ.

> "The saints on earth, and all the dead,
> But one communion make;
> All join in Christ their living head,
> And of his grace partake."

The home may not only be broken into, but broken up. Strangers stand on the old hearth. Unfamiliar voices greet us in the well-known rooms. Other children gather round the fireside or play in the garden. Once we shared in the sunshine of prosperity which beamed upon that home. Once we were among the happy group which day by day raised there the song of devout praise. Once we joined in the kindly hospitalities which made it no less sacred to the guest than to the home-dweller. But now all is changed. The time of trouble came. The home endeared to us by a thousand ties,—ties which never seemed so strong before,—the home of childhood, so loved, possessing such a charm of its own, was for ever broken up and gone. The associations of years were destroyed at a stroke, and the world became for us, henceforth, a world new and strange. We looked on each well-remembered scene, and learned from events which seemed to tread down ruthlessly our most hallowed feelings, that "here we have no continuing city." Happy those who under such circumstances can add, "But we seek one to come."

Scripture history strikingly illustrates both the instability of earthly homes, and the spirit in which the good man can see them broken up. How sublime is the resignation of Job, yet what a loss was his! His whole family in one day swept away, and his home left desolate. This was the climax of his bitter trial. One by one the messengers came with the sad burden of loss and ruin, but the last was the hardest to bear. We could pity him if for a moment his lips had murmured under a sorrow which seemed too heavy to be borne. But we hear only the words of resignation. Deep, very deep, is the wound which they disclose, hard the struggle of which they tell; but faith had the victory. "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."[1]

The case of David, as the history is related in the book of Samuel,[2] was one of peculiar sadness. His sorrow had a double edge. It was not only a gracious discipline, it was a severe fatherly chastisement. As he fasted and prayed, and lay all night upon the earth, we cannot doubt that his sad pleadings for the child were mingled with sadder thoughts of his sin against God. The weary night at length passed, but there was then no little life to pray for. His servants, as they looked upon his face, pale with sorrow and watching, feared to tell him of the event. "Behold," they

[1] Job i. 20—22. [2] 2 Sam. xii. 15—23.

reasoned, "while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?" They misjudged the man, the saint. They knew not the faith which had taught him to pray, and which now would teach him to bear. He saw in their faces the truth. The child was dead. "Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat." The trial of faith was over. It only now remained for him to say, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." But more, the father's heart was stirred with a new and holier affection. His faith looked beyond the perishable ties of earth to the enduring ones of the world beyond the grave; and full of hope that God would show him "the path of life," he could say, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

The temporary breaking up of the household of Bethany seems to have been permitted that our Lord might show to those who shall in all ages mourn over desolated homes, how full is the consolation which he is able to give in the very extremity of sorrow. Lazarus was dead. And he, their Master and Friend, though he knew how ill he was, had not been to see him! The sisters almost felt they had room for reproach. "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."[1] Little did they know what grace

[1] John xi. 21, 32.

was in store for them, with what an omnipotence of love He whom they were now tempted to think unkind would appear for their deliverance, and what precious springs of consolation for all sufferers their sorrow would give him occasion to open! Lazarus might have died, and his sisters might have sorrowed over their desolated home, as in all times hearts have had to sorrow; and when the commonplaces of consolation had been uttered, and had made them feel how deep and incurable was their wound, the busy world would have gone on its way, and left them to sorrow alone. But sorrow is an altogether different thing when Christ appears. Now what precious truths hallow the grave! How deep his sympathy with broken hearts! He wept with the sisters whom he loved, at the grave of his friend. But more, he came to bind up the broken-hearted, and to comfort those that mourn. How full are his words, not only of grace, but of power. And they are the inalienable possession of all who mourn over the pious dead. "I am the Resurrection, and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."[1] Even as we stand by the tomb our sorrow is comforted. We look upon the pale face of the dead, and feel that the victory is *theirs* and *ours*. A solemn and holy joy belongs to the place of Christian sepulture.

"For ever with the Lord!
Amen! So let it be.
Life from the dead is in that word,
And immortality!"

[1] John xi. 25, 26.

The records of Christian life enable us to represent these most bitter trials in the aspect which they bear, and the lessons which they yield, under the influence of the gospel of Christ. That gospel does not fail here. It not only blesses the home in the season of prosperity, and makes it a daily sanctuary, but it also dwells there with soothing and sustaining power in the time of sorrow. The graces of Christian character, which develop themselves in the common order of daily duty, shine out with even purer lustre in the dark night of adversity. Where the trial is most keenly felt, the blessed results of it, under the teaching of God's good Spirit, are often most fully seen. The Christian affection which so strengthened the bond of earthly union teaches a calm resignation, which as far surpasses philosophical stoicism as the gospel itself surpasses philosophical speculation. Out of the deeper sorrow which the Christian feels, because Christianity has deepened his affections, comes a joy which can be known by none but him; and the home which has been blessed by the cheerful piety of an affectionate and unbroken circle, becomes yet more richly blessed when that circle is invaded by death, and the hearts of those that remain are thereby drawn nearer in hope and sympathy to the eternal home. "How real is the distant isle to which a friend has gone, though it seemed formerly but a dim fog on the sea! How real is eternity when one whom we have loved, and love still, is there!"[1]

True piety was never designed to repress grief, but to make it subservient to the highest uses. It elevates

[1] Hewitson's Remains.

and sanctifies, but does not destroy, our human affections. The great reformer, whose courage never quailed before the foes of Christ, writes on the death of a child,—"My little daughter Elizabeth is dead; 'tis wonderful how sick at heart her loss has made me. I feel a mere woman, so great is the agitation that has since pervaded me. I could never have dreamed that a man's soul could be filled with such tenderness, even towards his child."[1]

"The pang occasioned by the death of a lovely infant," wrote Dr. Morison to a brother passing through this trial, "is one which only a parent with a feeling heart can understand. I would not desire to lose such a precious treasure without a struggle. I have no admiration of the social affections of some stoical parents. They are inferior in sensibility to most of the brute tribes, and they are anything but an ornament to the gospel, which breathes tenderness and kindly emotions in all its communications. It is a merciful provision of our heavenly Father, that the gushing tears which flow from a full heart prevent it from actually bursting. Give our united love to your dear wife, for whom we have great sympathy in her trying bereavement. There is a depth in a mother's heart which makes it capable of holding such sorrow. But may she find a more than equal depth *in the heart of Christ*, in whose everlasting arms her babe is enfolded."[2]

Severe trials repeatedly fell upon Dr. Morison's own home, but they were endured in the spirit of mingled tenderness and courage of which he wrote to his

[1] Life, by Michelet.
[2] Life, by Rev. J. Kennedy.

brother. When his son James died, at the age of eighteen, exclaiming, "I see his face! How incomprehensible is his love! Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" the bereaved father writes, "It would be shameful to repine at the decease of our dear child, under such delightful alleviations of our bereavement. His sufferings, too, at last were so great, that we almost longed to see him released. Still, the beautiful development of character which we beheld in him caused our hearts to cling to him very tenderly, and we are sad."

His beloved daughter, Mrs. Legge, who was with her husband in China, died on the 17th of October, 1852. The sad intelligence reached him at the very time that her brother Alexander was lying dead, having left two children to his care. Concerning this double trial, he thus wrote to his friend, Dr. Wardlaw:—"When we look at his two sweet orphan children, and think of our own advancing years, the heart yields to more than a momentary sadness. But our God is a Rock, and in his eternal and unchangeable perfections and covenant love we strive to rest. Pray that our weak faith may be increased.

"But how, dear friend, shall I break to you the news of yesterday? Our dear Mary, for whom our love was so intense, is no more. She died at Hong Kong . . . just two months before her dear brother. It is, indeed, overwhelming to our parental feelings to be thus visited. We would be still, and know that Jehovah is God."

Again, to his bereaved son-in-law,—"The sad news reached us when my dear wife and myself were overwhelmed with grief by the unexpected death of poor Alexander, when our cup of sorrow was so full that it

seemed as if it could scarcely hold any more; but so it is that we have sorrowed afresh, and with an intensity of emotion, as if we had not been visited before.

"What a mercy that in these seasons of deep trial we are called to *act!* We may feel incapacitated for it; but we should *perish* if we sat down to brood over the trial. The death of the active and the good is intended to sound the alarm in our ears—'Work while it is day; the night cometh.' . . . And now we must try, by God's grace, to gather up the lessons which he is teaching us by his fatherly discipline. Such removals, by which the heart is so deeply wounded and lacerated, are intended to impress us powerfully with God's *sovereignty.* His is the right to give and take. Thankful for his precious gifts, and for all the comfort and benediction they brought to us, let us bow, as the children of his love, beneath his chastening hand, feeling that though he is our Father, he is also our unerring Sovereign, and has a right, such as he will exercise, to do with us and ours as seemeth him good. I do pray and agonize that this bereavement may make me a far better man, and a far more devoted minister of the cross." "I shall never forget," says one of his friends, "the sublime resignation with which Dr. Morison bowed his head and held his peace, when it was my painful duty to break to him the decease of his beloved Mary in Hong Kong."

"In this extinction of hope of his life," says John Foster respecting his son, "our chief solicitude is respecting his higher and future interests." This solicitude was soon exchanged for hope. Within little more than a month from the date of this letter, the anticipated event took place, though not till the

hearts of his parents had been relieved from their deepest anxiety, by receiving from their son the calm, unreserved expression of his Christian faith and hope. Five days after his decease, his father wrote, "John has left us now (all but his wan, insensible form) no more to return. The last complete sentence he uttered was, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' . . . My interest in the accumulation of valuable books in this room will be sensibly lessened by the extinction of the anticipation of their being hereafter a source of instruction and gratification to him. He needs now no such means of knowledge. And how many things by this time he knows, which no books can tell!"

The Rev. Andrew Fuller, whose name is so well known in the history of modern missionary enterprise, was subjected to very heavy domestic afflictions. A dear child died at the age of seven years, after a protracted illness, during which his anxiety on her behalf seemed often more than he was able to bear. "At times," he writes in his diary, "I feel reconciled to whatever may befall me. I am not without good hopes of the child's piety; and as to her life, desirable as it is, the will of the Lord be done. But at other times I am distressed beyond due bounds. On the 25th, in particular, my distress seemed beyond all measure. I lay before the Lord, weeping like David, and refusing to be comforted." His grief brought on an attack of illness, and he never saw her again alive "Yes," he says, "she is gone! On Tuesday morning, May 30th, as I lay ill in bed in another room, I heard a whispering. I inquired, and all were silent, . . . all were silent! But all is well. I

feel reconciled to God. *I called my family round my bed.* I sat up and prayed as well as I could; I bowed my head and worshipped, and blessed a taking as well as a giving God."

The next trial which awaited him was a yet heavier one. His wife, who had frequently suffered from ill-health, lost her reason under a severe attack of illness from which she never rallied. One or two lucid intervals only were permitted to cheer the heart of her sorrowing husband. Thus he writes, about a month after the death of his child and during the illness of his wife,—"O my God, my soul is cast down within me! The afflictions in my family seem too heavy for me! 'O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me!' My thoughts are broken off, and all my prospects seem to be perished! I feel, however, some support from such Scriptures as these—'All things work together for good,' etc.; 'God, even our own God, shall bless us.' . . ." And again to a friend,—"My domestic trials are exceedingly great, far, very far beyond what I ever met with before. . . . The Lord knows what is before us! I feel also an habitual calmness, in finding myself *just in that situation that God would have me to be in*, and I find that now is the time for me to bear witness for him."

"Poor soul," he writes after her death, "she has found her home; . . . a home, a husband, and a family better than these! It is the cup which my Father hath given me to drink, and shall I not drink it?"

In the life of Sir T. F. Buxton we have a beautiful illustration of how trust in God and the possession of the hopes of the gospel can sustain the heart under

heavy domestic trials. He had been sent for home on account of the alarming illness of his eldest son, a boy ten years old. In a very few days, the disorder proved fatal. There was, however, "hope in his death," to which the sorrowing father thus refers in his journal:—

"Thus have we lost our eldest son, the peculiar object of our anxious care, a boy of great life and animation, of a most beautiful countenance, of a most sweet disposition; and, blessed be God, we feel that in the whole event His mercy has been extended to us. We can rejoice and mourn together,—mourn at our loss, and rejoice that, without exposure to the trials and temptations of the world, it has pleased God to take him to himself. We feel the most certain assurance that he is with God, and we feel persuaded that, if we could but be permitted to see him as he now is, we should never bewail him for another instant. . . . For myself, my heart's desire and prayer has been, that this event may wean me from the world, and fix my heart on God."

But the cup was not yet full. "His faith was destined to be more severely tried." Three younger children were lying in a precarious state. "The week past," he writes, "has been one of the most acute anxiety. Oh! when one affliction flows in upon us after another, may they burst the bonds by which we are tied to earth, may they direct us heavenward, and may we, having our treasures in heaven, have our hearts there also. In myself how much is there of unholiness, of worldliness, of pride, of spiritual deadness; and for myself, I would only now ask that the Lord would eradicate and extinguish these, at whatever cost, at whatever

sacrifice. . . . Cannot He who rules the universe decide what is best for the children he has lent me? May I yield to that will!"

They died, and the stricken heart of the father thus pours out its complaint and prayer:—"Thus, in little more than a month, have we lost the darlings and delights of our life; but they are in peace: and for ourselves we know that this affliction may redound to our eternal benefit if we receive it aright. . . . How are all our most choice and comely blossoms cut off! How naked do we appear, how stripped of our treasures! O my God! my God! be thou our consoler, and comfort us, not with the joys of this world, but with faith, love, obedience, patience, and resignation."[1]

The gentle and truly Christian spirit of the poet Cowper knew how to speak of the consolations of the gospel under scenes of home sorrow. The loss of his brother, in the prime of life and the midst of his increasing fame, filled him with deep grief; but it was a grief which, to his mind, was more than mitigated by his thankfulness for that brother's true conversion to God. After relating to his friend, the Rev. William Unwin, the great change which had taken place in his religious character, he says, "This had God wrought. I have praised him for his marvellous act, and have felt a joy of heart upon the subject of my brother's death, such as I never felt but in my own conversion. He is now before the throne; and yet a little while and we shall meet—never more to be divided."

"We rather rejoice than mourn with you," he writes

[1] Life, by his Son.

to the Rev. J. Newton, "on the occasion of Mrs. C——'s death. In the case of believers, death has lost his sting, not only with respect to those he takes away, but with respect to survivors also. Nature, indeed, will always suggest some causes of sorrow when an amiable and Christian friend departs, but the Scripture suggests so many more and so much more important reasons to rejoice, that, on such occasions, perhaps more remarkably than on any other, sorrow is turned into joy. The law of our land is affronted if we say the king dies, and insists on it that he only demises. This, which is a fiction where a monarch only is in question, in the case of a Christian is reality and truth. He only lays aside a body which it is his privilege to be encumbered with no longer, and, instead of dying, in that moment he begins to live."

His friend Unwin, to whom he wrote the interesting letter on his brother's death already quoted, was himself, at a comparatively early age, called away by death in the midst of great usefulness. Cowper thus writes to Lady Hesketh:—"I sent you, my dear, a melancholy letter, and I do not know that I shall now send you one very unlike it. Not that anything occurs in consequence of our late loss more afflictive than was to be expected, but the mind does not perfectly recover its tone after a shock like that which has been felt so lately. This I observe, that though my experience has long since taught me that this world is a world of shadows, and that it is the more prudent, as well as the more Christian course, to possess the comforts that we find in it as if we possessed them not, it is no easy matter to reduce this doctrine into practice. We

forget that that God who gave them may, when he pleases, take them away; and that perhaps it may please him to take them at a time when we least expect, or are least disposed to part from them. Thus it has happened in the present case. There never was a moment in Unwin's life when there seemed to be more urgent want of him than the moment in which he died. . . . God seemed to have made him just what he was, that he might be a blessing to others, and, when the influence of his character and abilities began to be felt, removed him. These are mysteries, my dear, that we cannot contemplate without astonishment, but which will, nevertheless, be explained hereafter, and must in the mean time be revered in silence. . . . He lived the life and died the death of a Christian. The consequence is, if possible, more unavoidable than the most mathematical conclusion, that therefore he is happy."[1]

The loss of his own mother, almost during his infancy, was a life-long sorrow to him. And never was such sorrow so beautifully treasured up in immortal verse as in his lines "On the Receipt of my Mother's Picture,"—

"My mother! when I learn'd that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hover'd thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son?
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun!
Perhaps thou gav'st me, though unfelt, a kiss;
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss.
Ah, that maternal smile! it answers—yes.
I heard the bell toll'd on thy burial day;
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,

[1] Life and Works of Cowper.

And, turning from my nursery window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
But was it such? It was. Where thou art gone
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting word shall pass my lips no more!"

The pious and devoted Matthew Henry had, in his early ministry, to experience the desolateness of a home invaded by death. His first trial was almost overwhelming. Within a year and a half of his marriage he was called to part with an amiable, accomplished, and much-beloved wife. "I then lived," says his biographer, "about eighteen miles from him, and had the sad news early sent me, and immediately resolved to go and mourn with him; and a sorrowful family I there found. The mother seemed to me to bear the affliction with the most composed mind. One then present told me, this good gentlewoman was as much as any overwhelmed with grief when she saw her dear child was dead; but in about half an hour's time she checked herself with these words, —'It is the Lord; I have done; I have done; I will not repine,' and then endeavoured to comfort others. . . . The first word Mr. Henry spoke to me on this occasion, with many tears, was, 'I know nothing could support me under such a loss as this, but the good hope I have that she is gone to heaven, and that in a little time I shall follow her thither.'"

A second blow fell upon him a few years later, in the death of the first child by his second marriage. But he neither sank nor murmured under it. While we cannot read his words without feeling how the

spirit of the gospel gave to his grief greater tenderness, we cannot but be struck with the spirit of holy resignation with which the stroke was borne. "In the morning," he says, "I had the child in my arms, endeavouring solemnly to give it up to God, and to bring my heart to God's will, and presently there seemed to be some reviving; but while I was writing this down, I was suddenly called out of my closet. I went for the doctor and brought him with me, but as soon as we came in, the sweet babe quietly departed, between the mother's arms and mine; . . . and now my house is a house of mourning. . . . I had set mine affection upon it, I am afraid, too much. God is wise, and righteous, and faithful. . . . Blessed be God for the covenant of grace with me and mine; it is well ordered in all things and sure. Oh that I could learn now to comfort others with the same comforts with which I trust I am comforted of my God!"

Again he was placed in the furnace of affliction by the loss of a second child, but still faith does not fail. "The Lord is righteous," he says; "he takes and gives, and gives and takes again. I desire to submit, but, O Lord, show me wherefore thou contendest with me." And again, when he was called to part with a third unexpectedly, almost suddenly,—"My desire is to be sensible of the affliction, and yet patient under it; 'tis a rod, a smarting rod. God calls my sin to my remembrance,—the coldness of my love to God, and the abuse of spiritual comforts: 'tis a rod in the hand of my Father. I desire in it to see a father's authority, who may do what he will; and a father's love, who will do what is best."[1]

[1] Life, by W. Tong.

This invasion of the home by the death of children in infancy, as it is one of the most common trials to which families are subject, so is it one which admits of most abundant consolation. The little ones are at rest. The lambs are gathered into the fold. They are ever with the Lord. There is something unspeakably beautiful in the thought of a life transferred, before it is tainted with actual sin, to a state of eternal purity and peace, to grow up for ever in the light of God's presence. Sharp as may be the pang of suffering when we part with these dear ones,—how dear we never know till we lose them,—reflection must bring to the Christian parent the most enduring comfort. As we feel how much the brief life had become a part of our own,—how much we never knew till that life was still; as we turn with a quiver of anguish from the sight of the little toys no longer wanted, and miss the sound of the little feet which had been so ready to welcome us, we cannot but rejoice, even in our tribulation. Christ has called the little ones to come to him, and we dare not, would not forbid them.

"Our dear delicate baby," writes Legh Richmond, "has taken his flight to a happier world! I write beside his unspeakably beautiful remains. Of all my twelve babes I never clung to one like this, perhaps because I never expected his life. He was formed for a higher state than this, and is taken away from the evil to come. He died in my arms, lovelier than the loveliest, calmer than the calmest. His previously languid eye suddenly illumed into heavenly brightness and vigour; it looked at me with full intelligence,

seemed to say, 'Farewell! I am going to Jesus,' and he was gone."

Under peculiarly trying circumstances, away from the friends and associations of his native land, his brother missionaries both ill and unable to come to him, the Rev. Richard Knill could thus write on the loss of his child.

"After I had kissed her sweet forehead and her clay-cold purple lips, I took her dear hand in mine, and my soul at this moment received unspeakable comfort. For I thought, this hand will never be lifted against God, this heart will never indulge a thought contrary to his holy will, this silent tongue will never utter a word of rebellion, nor shall the little feet ever be found in the broad road that leads to death! I cannot describe how happy I felt at the thought of this, while the tears rolled down my cheek with all the tender emotion of a fond father. I thanked God and took courage, and, hastening to my wife, related to her how the Lord had comforted me. She also was greatly consoled, and we prayed together for the Lord to help us through the day. Oh, it was a day never to be forgotten; and to make our grief complete, neither of our dear brothers, Paterson and Henderson, could come to help us, and pray with us, or bury the babe. Thanks be to God, I was enabled to do this also. . . . We committed the dear little body to the dust, in full assurance that it shall rise again all-triumphant and glorious. Tears have since been our meat day and night; but they are sometimes tears of tenderness, sometimes of sorrow, sometimes of gratitude. Oh, what a precious gospel is our gospel! What life

and immortality are brought to light by it! Without it we should not know what would become of little children."[1]

Often the loss of children is made in a peculiarly affecting manner the means of bringing spiritual blessings to parents and to their remaining children. It was the death of an infant brother that produced so deep an impression on the mind of Wilberforce Richmond; and many a parent has found "that good part which shall not be taken away,"[2] through having the thoughts directed heavenward by the departure of a dear child thither. A minister once said to a mother weeping over her last, and, as it seemed, most precious babe, "God never takes anything from us but he means to give us something better." The words impressed her mind. There was but one thing that could be better than her child, but one thing she felt that could compensate for its loss. She was led to think, to pray, and finally found peace in that Saviour who had taken her little one to himself. The little child who is gone, they cannot doubt, to heaven, is in its departure a messenger of truth and mercy to the bereaved parents. It makes more real to them the relation between heaven and earth. Those now for ever happy ones seem like the angels which Jacob saw in his dream "ascending and descending" between heaven and earth. They seem to beckon those who so dearly loved them to follow them thither. The loss of them softens the heart, and opens it to receive religious impressions.

[1] Life of Rev. R. Knill, by Rev. C. M. Birrell.
[2] Luke x. 42.

The life beyond the grave becomes, perhaps for the first time, a solemn reality.

In the natural order of things homes *must* be broken up. The time must come when the children of the household, who have been protected by all its strength, nourished by its affection, trained by its discipline, must leave the charmed circle of home, to battle with the duties and difficulties of the outer world. God's providence sometimes seems to drive us from the rest where we would fain stay, and where parental affection would fain keep us. But it must not be. We must fight the battle of life for ourselves. And it is one great object of the tender care and training of home to prepare for this inevitable breaking up of its happy associations; to send forth those who have enjoyed them, fully equipped for the field of warfare or of duty.

Very widely sometimes are they scattered who once were so inseparable. Perhaps in far distant lands they gather families of their own. One after another, as time passes on, is committed to the silent dust. The venerable heads of the household, long left almost alone, are gathered to their fathers, and only some of their children who left their hearth stand around their tomb. But all is not sad even in such a retrospect. In that home religion dwelt and sanctified all the life. In that circle of holy affection and influence the children grew up in the knowledge and fear of God. They carried into homes of their own the lessons of love and piety they learned there, and new families are now gathered, to be trained under the same influences. "The memory of the just is blessed,"

and remains a precious legacy to succeeding generations.

And above all, the family, though continually being broken up on earth, is being regathered in heaven. One by one,—now a tender sister, now an affectionate brother, now a revered father, and at no long interval a widowed mother,—they pass away into rest. Little children, too, gather there, from one and another of the new homes which have been established. The circle enlarges. They inhabit the many mansions of the Father's house. They meet in unbroken harmony. Theirs is a sinless, and therefore a sorrowless home. Soon the last of the home-circle shall join them, the last weary wanderer shall find his rest among them, and they shall separate no more.

Happy, above all conditions of earthly happiness, those homes concerning which this hope can be entertained! Alas, that the thought must force itself upon us that it may not be so! The wanderer from the earthly home may be also a wanderer from heaven. The Father's house may never be his dwelling-place. The joyful reunion, in a sinless and perfectly happy state, with those whom he loved here, may never be his. There may come a time when the parent, in the anguish of his heart, shall wish that his beloved child had died in innocent infancy, rather than have lived to become what he is, when his anguish shall cry out in his secret chamber with the bitter lament, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"[1] We dread to follow the sad thought to its

[1] 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

eternal issues. An eternity without a home! An eternity without love, without rest, without hope! An eternity of remorse, and anguish, and tormenting regrets! Oh! Christian parents, spare no prayers, no pains, that your dear ones may avoid this fearful doom. Oh! children of pious parents, take heed lest it be yours.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ETERNAL HOME.

OUR Lord's words to his disciples, "In my Father's house are many mansions,"[1] strike a chord in every heart which knows or has known the blessings of Christian home-life. The child still nestling under the care of a mother's love; the young man who yet looks fondly back to the home of his boyhood; the man around whom a new family is gathering in an ever dearer home of his own; the sorrowing, who have to mourn the breaking up of the home, alike find in these words fitting instruction and comfort. How endeared becomes the hope of heaven, when we learn of it through the affection and enjoyment of a well-regulated home! And how consoling the thought to the heart of the sorrowing, whose household has been smitten, that he can look forward to a home which shall never be invaded by sorrow, never broken up by separation or death!

In our contemplation of the Christian home on earth, we have necessarily had to keep constantly in view the fact of sin, of imperfect attainment of moral excellence, of defects and failures to which the wisest arrangements leave the family here constantly exposed. The very facts that moral restraint and discipline are necessary, that evil habits have to be vigilantly guarded

[1] John xiv. 2.

against, and good ones formed with persevering care, show us that, in the present state, the ideal family life can never be attained. The family, though of Divine ordination, and in itself the purest of all earthly associations, shares in the disorder which sin has been the means of introducing into everything human.

"Earth has no unpolluted spring,"

even though we seek for it in the almost sacred recesses of family associations and enjoyments. The witness is there, as it is in the darker shadows cast by vice and crime on the aspect of society at large, that sin has entered the world, and that no earthly sanctuary *can* be our rest, because it is polluted.

In this respect the heavenly home strikingly contrasts with the earthly one, even in its highest and purest aspects. There, we may rest assured, will be found perfect purity, perfect loveliness of character. There, we may be certain, will be none of those moral defects which now endanger the peace of families, and which sometimes become the source of their deepest sorrows. There, too, no imperfect fulfilment of the family relationship will open the way for unkind suspicions, or tempt to the utterance of harsh words. Duty will never be neglected, affection will know no change. Each member of that vast family will have the fullest confidence in every other, for each will see reflected in all, the perfect love which casteth out fear. Affection will be unsuspicious in the fulness of its own perfect integrity. Mutual sympathy, which grows here out of a long intimacy with each other's thoughts, joys, and sorrows, will there arise out of perfect unison

of feeling, and perfect sincerity and purity of heart. The order and peace which a wise authority now strives to maintain among the various and oft-times conflicting elements of a household, will there be secured by the perfect rule of love and joy in each heart. All, in fact, that makes our Christian homes what they are, as the best and brightest aspects of human life on earth, will, in the eternal home, be carried to its highest perfection; and the family of heaven, though it be a multitude which no man can number, "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,"[1] will be *one;*—one in its relation to Him "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named;"[2] one in the perfect affection with which every heart shall overflow to all; and one in joyful and eternal union with Him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood.[3]

It is impossible to form an adequate conception of that glorious and blessed state as a home. The vastness and marvellousness of all that belongs to heaven forbid this. Our affections are narrowed by the necessities of our present state. Indeed, they must be narrowed to attain their purest development. We can, therefore, hardly imagine the relationships of that world. We can hardly grasp the thought of a perfect family affection on so vast a scale as is thus suggested to us. We naturally imagine a limited circle, in which our deepest, tenderest affections shall grow to their fullest perfection. But what if the extent of the family circle of heaven should itself be the means of at once enlarging and deepening our affections, so that

[1] Rev vii. 9. [2] Ephes. iii. 15. [3] Rev. i. 5.

the greatness of the number claiming and receiving our love should be itself an increase of our bliss? We may rest assured that it will be so. The increase of our family circle on earth does not cause our love to lessen towards each member of it; the additions to it only call forth an increase of individual affection. And so we may believe that when our hearts are perfectly pure, we shall meet that vast multitude with the same feelings of affectionate confidence, of deep sympathy and interest, which we now feel towards the members of our own family. What a glorious hope is thus presented to us! And thus, too, we see how our family affection becomes, by Divine teaching, a means of preparing us for heaven. We shall one day love all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, with a pure, deep, unchanging family affection.

We shrink, perhaps, from this, as though the expansion of our love, the widening of its limits, would destroy its intensity towards those whom we love now. Some have gone from us whom we hope to meet there. Our families, one by one, are breaking up on earth, and we hope, as we stand by grave after grave, that they shall be regathered in heaven. Shall they not then, these dear ones, be especially ours? Shall we not again hold sweet converse—how much purer and loftier then!—with those whom we loved on earth? There is nothing in the word of God to forbid this hope. On the contrary, there is much that would encourage it. But just as the enlargement of our family circle on earth only expands our hearts, and makes room in them for more affection, and by no means diminishes our love to those whom we loved before, so in that holy state our hearts shall be able

to embrace all who love Christ, to receive them as a part of our own family circle, as dear to us as those with whom our intercourse, begun on earth, is renewed and perfected.

We must take into consideration, too, that our heavenly home will be free from those conditions of life which help now to narrow our sympathies, and which make it impossible that there can ever be here a perfect community of affection. This is impossible even in the limited family circle; it is absurd to think of it on any larger scale. The church of Christ has this oneness of love set before it as its ideal, after which it must ever strive, but the imperfections of our earthly state have hitherto prevented its attainment. But these imperfections shall no longer exist in that world, and many things which seem difficulties to us here—obstacles in the way of affection —are, as far as our future state is concerned, entirely imaginary. Such entire sympathy will subsist between those who are all perfectly holy, and who are "made perfect in love," that there will be a realization of Christ's own thought when he stretched out his hand towards his disciples, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."[1]

We revert to the words which were quoted at the commencement of this chapter. "In my Father's house." How tender and holy are the feelings thus suggested to us! The aspect of our earthly life which is purest, brightest, best, is employed to foreshadow

[1] Matt. xii. 49, 50.

the glorious future. Heaven is to be our *home*. It is prefigured to us by that which represents to us the tenderest care, the fondest affection, the warmest sympathy, the truest unity of heart and life; by that which gives to us the fullest idea of protection and of rest, and which associates with the idea of duty the all-constraining influence of affection. But there is one aspect of the comparison which does not hold good. The heavenly home *can never be broken up*. The most united family circle may be scattered far and wide through the earth, and the place that once knew them may know them no more for ever. Our earthly relationships themselves are but of uncertain tenure, and at best but of brief duration. In how many families has the premature loss of a husband or a wife, of a son or daughter, been like the loss of half their own life to those left behind! And in most families there will be one left to mourn by himself, as the last survivor of a once happy circle. The history of family life is not unfrequently a history of perpetual and painful vicissitude. The youth or the maiden departs from the home amid the manifestation of overflowing affection, and returns, if at all, to find that the old home exists no more. Or one by one the number diminishes, till the family itself becomes extinct.

This cannot be in the heavenly home. The family circle there shall be for ever unbroken. "There shall be no more death."[1] They "shall go no more out."[2] There shall be none of the painful changes by which the peace of families is destroyed, by which earthly

[1] Rev. xxi. 4. [2] Rev. iii. 12.

refuges are crumbled to dust. The life, in every aspect of it, in every condition of it, will be perfect. And "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."[1] Our home shall not only be supremely happy, but perfectly safe. It shall not be possible for temptation to creep in and draw away its victim from that sacred retreat. David shall never have to mourn over an Absalom self-destroyed. Martha and Mary shall never have to weep at a brother's grave. "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes."[2] He will take away all cause for tears.

The eternal home! Do not the words themselves suggest images of all that is peaceful and beautiful? They speak instruction and comfort to every true follower of Christ. Our hope is a sinless, sorrowless, deathless home. And our aim here must correspond to our hope. Earthly homes must be made means of preparation for that heavenly one. We must so live in them, so live among those whose relationship to ourselves calls for our especial affection and sympathy, that when we are brought into the family of heaven, we may be *at home;*—at home in its holy service; at home in the love which shall fill our hearts towards all who bear the image of our Lord, and whom our Father has admitted to his house "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Then may we take to our hearts the full consolations of our Lord's cheering promise, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 10. [2] Rev. vii. 17.

have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."[1]

One parting word. This eternal home can only be ours through personal faith in Christ. He died that we might live for ever in it. He is now the Way to it. The renewal, which alone can fit us for it, is the work of the Holy Spirit, and is inseparably associated with saving faith in Him. Without him we must be homeless and hopeless for ever!

Our earthly homes must, in the ordinary course of nature, soon be broken up. Already, perhaps, the breach has been made, which we feel can never again be perfectly healed.

"Friend after friend departs;
Who has not lost a friend?
There is no union here of hearts
That hath not here an end:
Were this frail world our final rest,
Living or dying none were blest.

"Beyond the flight of time—
Beyond the reign of death—
There surely is some blessed clime
Where life is not a breath;
Nor life's affections transient fire,
Whose sparks fly upward and expire!

"There is a world above,
Where parting is unknown—
A long eternity of love,
Form'd for the good alone;
And faith beholds the dying here
Translated to that glorious sphere.

[1] John xiv. 1–3.

" Thus star by star declines,
Till *all* are pass'd away;
As morning high and higher shines
To pure and perfect day:
Nor sink those stars in empty night,
But hide themselves in heaven's own light."

There is only one solace, only one ground of hope—the supporting and comforting presence of Him who tells us of the many mansions of his Father's house. May the guiding, sanctifying Spirit teach us to find through Him the perfect and enduring home which earth denies!

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